



Between Learning and Business:

ESOL Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional

Practice in Post-school Private Training

Establishments

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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Disclaimer

I hereby state that this research is conducted and written by me and that to the best of my awareness and belief, it contains no material that has been previously published by another writer except where due reference is made. This thesis has not been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of any educational institution.

Signed: 
Dated: 30/09/2020

Dedication

To those who thirst knowledge.

To the soul of my father, Ahmed Zohairy, for being my first teacher.

To the souls of the mosque-shooting martyrs; the 51 Shuhada and their families.

To my mother, Om Mohammed Abo Elenin, for her unconditional love and support.

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Recite in the name of your Lord who created; created man from a clinging substance. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous who taught by the pen; taught man that which he knew not.

(The Holly Quran, Sura Al-Alaq, Aya 1-5)

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Abstract

This thesis investigates English-for-speakers-of-other-languages (ESOL) teachers' perceptions of their own professional practice in post-school private training establishments. This broadly phenomenological case study was grounded in five cases of teachers that described each teachers' work life experiences in response to their immediate work context as well as their work milieu. The context of the study included private training establishments (PTEs) in Christchurch, New Zealand. PTEs are for-profit educational organisations with goals that generally seek to maximise revenue. Teaching in this type of educational context presented a particular work context which shaped ESOL teachers' professional practice. This study examines how teachers perceived their interaction with the particular aspects of work context in PTEs, such as private institutions' values, fee-paying students, curriculum deliberation, and relationships with colleague teachers. In addition, the study sheds light on teachers' professional choices, identity formation, sense of agency, and resilience-building in a commercialised ESOL teaching milieu.

Private ESOL teaching is still an under researched area and generally uncharted waters for researchers. Although there is some published literature on the impact of ESOL teachers' performance on students' outcome, few studies focus on teachers' perception of their own professional practice. In New Zealand, there is limited research which focused on ESOL teachers' perceptions of the relationship between their professional practice and work conditions in PTEs. Private ESOL teaching work environment seems to pose challenges to teachers which affect their performance, professional knowledge, and career progress. In private training establishments, ESOL teachers' perception of their ability to reconcile between educational principles and business values provoked heated discussions in the literature regarding private higher education.

An interpretative approach has been utilised to set the theoretical basis for this broadly phenomenological case study. The use of transcendental phenomenology allowed teachers' views of the phenomenon of ESOL teachers' professional practice in PTEs to emerge from the interwoven five narratives written to represent participants' stories as described by them in the interviews. From the individual narratives, key themes were identified in relation to the specific experiences and perceptions of each of the participant teachers, and subsequently cross-case themes were identified to describe the phenomenon of teaching English language in PTEs as noted by teachers.

Findings from this case study revealed various perceptions of private ESOL teaching and how this interacted with their professional practice. Teachers' daily work seemed like a complex and multi-layered practice; a socially situated activity. The findings of this research also revealed the tensions and complicated relationships teachers have to grapple with to be able to achieve their moral and ethical goals. The findings provide insights into the need for changes in ESOL teacher training and education programmes to ensure they are more clearly aligned to the actual teaching conditions in PTEs, and prepare ESOL teachers to work in such a business oriented environment.

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

This thesis reports research that explored five ESOL teachers' perceptions of their work life practices in response to their work milieu of private training establishments (PTEs) in Christchurch, New Zealand. The main aim of the study is to answer the overarching research question of how teachers of English-to- speakers-of-other-languages in private training establishments identify and address challenges of their professional practice. The introduction chapter presents an overview of this research study, as it describes the study background, purpose, rationale, context, as well as my contextual personal narrative as a researcher in the field of private ESOL education.

Mills (2019) described teaching as a cognitive and an emotional activity which involves negotiation of meaning on different levels including students and curriculum. Thus, teachers' professional practice is always associated with teachers' need to be engaged in negotiations with their own identity, close teaching context, and the broader teaching milieu. The tensions resulting from teachers' interaction with their work milieu were highlighted and discussed in literature (Fitzsimons, 1997; Herbert, Allen, & McDonald, 2018; Walker, 2011b, 2014). In this study, ESOL teaching in private training establishments presents a significant case study of how teachers perceive internal and external influencing aspects of their teaching environment. Participant teachers' stories included their attempts to grapple with the close context which included curriculum, teachers, students, and institutional values as well as the broader teaching milieu which encompasses external influences such as the commercial nature of PTEs. The combination of these influences brought tensions to teachers' professional practice. This study is about how participant teachers' perceived these challenges, and what decisions they made to face them.

This case study was limited by time and place, as it investigated ESOL teachers in three private training establishments in Christchurch, New Zealand. In addition, the participants' interviews were conducted over a period of time which varied between five to nine months. Participants in this case study reported their perceptions of aspects of their professional practice specifically in relation to their identity formation and sense of agency. This evolving nature of teachers' perceptions of their professional practice will definitely remain dynamic, as influences around teachers are always changing. Thus, this phenomenological case study presented a slice of

ESOL teachers' professional practice work life experiences within the described time and place frameworks.

My personal journey through different contexts as an ESOL teacher

I started my career as an ESOL teacher in the Middle East where private ESOL teaching had much of *under the surface* politics, competing demands, unspoken requirements, and external influences which directed work conditions. Rather than drawing a comparison between private ESOL teaching in the Middle East and New Zealand, in this section, I have chosen to share stories about my personal professional practice in different ESOL teaching contexts. This section aims to describe the background and rationale of this study and explain my personal interest in investigating private ESOL teaching institutions.

Macalister (2018) stated that “becoming a language teacher can be a never-ending journey”. Like many ESOL teachers in The Middle East, I started teaching after finishing my university degree in arts from the English language and literature department in 1999. The undergraduate degree in my faculty focused on English literature and linguistics in general with little focus on ESOL teaching. After graduation, as a novice teacher, my teaching tool box was mainly made of a set of teaching techniques which I observed, as a student, my teachers applying. Therefore, my professional practice as a novice ESOL teacher was mainly informed by own experience as a previous student.

As I decided to travel and teach ESOL, I accepted a job offer in a private ESOL institution in one of the gulf countries in 2004. The institution was owned by a businessman and managed by one of the shareholders who used to be an experienced ESOL teacher. The teaching philosophy of this institution was guided by the owners' understanding of the communicative approach which was the most common teaching approach among ESOL institutions at this period. Therefore, their understanding of the most important qualities of a good teacher was limited to teachers' ability to achieve students' satisfaction.

The number of PLD sessions offered to teachers was limited, and the quality was poor. PLD sessions tended to be obligatory with low budget and limited learning resources. All teachers had to rely on their individual attempts to develop professionally and enhance their professional practice. Due to the impact of this teaching environment, teachers had to work independently, and their practices were driven by the competitive nature of the workplace. Despite the negative impact of that tough work environment, my skills in dealing with workplace challenges especially in relation to students' satisfaction were enhanced.

I did not have the chance to systematically reflect on my teaching and question my teaching methodology until I left this private institution and worked for one of the government universities. The work atmosphere in the government funded institution was less stressful and less competitive. It also included a larger number of experienced and qualified ESOL teachers. I did the Cambridge Diploma in Teaching English to Adults (DELTA), and that was my first true eye opener to ESOL teaching as a discipline compared to my previous studies of linguistics and literature. My ability to learn and develop increased and I started attending ESOL conferences in the region. After that, I became a member of the PLD unit in the same university.

In 2016, I came to Christchurch and wanted to build bridges with some private training establishments (PTEs), so I could get a permission to conduct my research study in their institutions. I managed to maintain business relationships with some of them, and I was offered an ESOL teaching fixed term contract in some PTEs. It was a good chance to have this opportunity to work for PTEs, and interact with ESOL teachers in NZ and learn more about their professional practice. PTEs in Christchurch presented a different context compared to my background knowledge about private ESOL teaching in the Middle East. I was surprised that ESOL teachers in PTEs in Christchurch, although more professional, were also overwhelmed with lesson planning, assessment, and sometimes administrative tasks rather which limited their opportunities to consider ways to improve their professional practices. At this stage, my understanding of teachers' professional practice in PTEs was informed by Walker's (2011a, 2013, 2014) ideas about PTEs as a particular work environment which is driven by both educational principles and business values simultaneously. My personal experience in the private sector in New Zealand showed that teachers do not have enough time to get engaged in systematic reflective activities, and they might not have time to experiment with teaching techniques or have much say in changing their professional practices. This observation was made not to criticise or evaluate the status of teachers, but to try to reflect on my personal observations of ESOL teaching in PTEs during the short time I worked as an ESOL teacher in New Zealand.

Post-school education in New Zealand

In the twentieth century, economic growth around the world brought intellectual challenges such as understanding the relationship between education and the economy. The relationship between business and education brought tensions which were evident in many aspects of New Zealand society such as post-school education or what is also called tertiary education

(McLaughlin, 2003). In New Zealand, post-school education refers to as all post-school learning which includes higher education degrees and diplomas in addition to vocational education and training courses in various post-school education organisations (Ministry of Education, 2015). Emerson and Mansvelt (2014) noted that post-school education sector in New Zealand covers all workplace training organisations owned by private or government providers such as private training establishments (PTEs), institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs), wananga, and universities. Many research publications (Education New Zealand, 2019; Kromydas, 2017; NZ Productivity Commission, 2017) stated that the post-school education is a key to individuals' greater personal satisfaction, and social stabilisation. These studies also stated that in New Zealand, post-school education attracts a large number of local and international students, and contributes to the economy of the whole country.

According to the New Zealand Ministry of Education (MoE) Te Tahuhu O Te Matauranga, on 1 August 2020, a new Education and Training Act came into effect to incorporate and replace the old Acts of 1964 and 1989 (Ministry of Education, 2020). Actually, it was not until the late 1980s that the structure of the post-school education sector was formally created (Abbott, 2006; Van Eekelen, Vermunt, & Boshuizen, 2006). In the 1990s, MoE adopted new post-school education policies that were more competitive and market directed to be able to serve this complex fabric of the New Zealand society (McLaughlin, 2003; Skyrme, 2008). Then, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) was established as one of the main agencies that administer education in New Zealand. In the current Education and Training Act 2020, MoE gave more attention to professional practices in private training establishments (PTEs) by creating a sub category for PTEs to regulate their operating matters such as monitoring quality assurance. PTEs have been attracting a large number of teachers which include English-to-speakers-of-other-languages (ESOL) teachers.

ESOL teachers represent the core of the workforce in PTEs, as they guide and facilitate students' learning. Therefore, a number of studies (Codd, 2005; Leach, Zepke, & Butler, 2014; Timperley, 2008) investigated the New Zealand context of higher education, and highlighted the importance of understanding the dynamics of teachers' professional practice to improve their performance as well as students' outcomes.

Exploring context in New Zealand: Private training establishments

This research study aims to examine ESOL teachers' professional practice in private training establishments (PTEs) in Christchurch. Therefore, the context of this study does not include

ESOL post-school teaching in universities or any crown identities that receive funds and support from the government. The private training establishments (PTEs) investigated in this study are out of the mainstream of state funded education. In 2016, I had a meeting with the principal of one of the biggest PTEs in Christchurch and New Zealand. We discussed how ESOL teachers might have struggled to keep their jobs while PTEs were recovering from the 2011 earthquake financial consequences. The institution principal stated that some PTEs closed their campuses in Christchurch and dismissed their teachers to the institution's branches in Wellington or Auckland while some other institutions ended teachers' contracts. She went on to explain that this recession did not last long, as ESOL teaching has been thriving in the past few years, but the profession of ESOL teaching was severely affected. Although she stated that the number of students has remarkably increased and the market has witnessed the emergence of new service providers, this discussion challenged me with questions about ESOL teachers' job security and the sustainability of the private ESOL teaching industry as a whole.

After this meeting, I was offered a teaching opportunity for about five weeks in the same PTE. As a temporary teacher, I was given a course book and was asked to teach a group of advanced students. The class was formed of a group of multilevel students with varied learning needs and abilities. My first week was very hard, as I tried to cope with this complicated situation, and I was new to the country and hardly knew anything about international students in New Zealand. There was no induction course, so I had to take charge of my professional learning in a context which was totally new to me. My first learning resource was, as usual, my background knowledge: what I knew about teaching, and my previous teaching experiences. I started revisiting my old teaching techniques, thinking about my previous experiences, retrieving my old teaching tricks. Then, I looked again at the literature and reviewed ESOL teaching techniques reported in the writings of Scrivener (2005), Freeman (2000), and Richards (2001). It took me more than two weeks to come up with modified teaching material and teaching techniques that allowed my students to learn in a multilevel classroom. I also informally talked to another teacher about what she would do to deal with such a challenge, and she talked about varied and personalised learning. At the end of the second week, I realised that I was able to partly sort out the teaching issues, and I was able to better my teaching for my students and saved my face in front of the school management. During this time, I was always wondering about how other teachers, who could be less experienced than me, would tackle their daily teaching issues in such a challenging teaching environment.

After that, I had the chance to teach in another PTE in the same city. Students in this PTE were multinational and had a diverse array of study purposes. The market of private ESOL teaching in Christchurch attracted students from China, Brazil, Argentina and other countries from Far East and Latin America. Thus, classrooms were heterogeneous in many ways and this kept teachers busy creating the balance between teaching challenges and students' demands. International students in a significant majority of PTEs have studied English language to be able to complete further studies in New Zealand, or to get promoted at work. On the other hand, students joined these institutions to get a student visa which would allow them to stay and work in New Zealand. Students in these PTEs studied in classes equipped with computers, overhead projectors and internet. There was also a range of ESOL course book series as supplementary material to support the assigned student course books. Textbooks were designed by famous publishers such as Oxford and Cambridge Presses. These arrangements were meant to be economical of both places and resources were utilised to reduce spendings and maximise profit for PTEs owners (Walker, 2013).

Based on my initial understanding of work conditions in PTEs ESOL teachers varied between permanent, fixed term, casual, and reliever teachers. Only permanent teachers had a relatively stable career, while fixed term, casual and reliever teachers' jobs were subject to market demand. Teachers in PTEs in Christchurch had a wide range of teachers' qualifications. Generally, ESOL teaching does not require a specific registration by the government in New Zealand. Therefore, ESOL teachers in PTEs could be ESOL qualified or international postgraduate students who had no ESOL qualifications. ESOL teachers' qualifications include undergraduate or/and postgraduate degrees in a relevant major as well as CELTA, DELTA, and ESOL certificates. Ph.D. students of other majors such as music, psychology taught English as part time or fixed term teachers. In addition, retired school teachers tended to teach ESOL as relievers if they were native speakers of English regardless of their educational backgrounds.

ESOL teachers in investigated PTEs taught General English (GE), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), IELTS preparation, and New Zealand Certificate of English Language qualifications (NZCEL). This variety of teaching programmes affected teachers' professional practice and drove their decision making about teaching and professional learning. For instance, those who taught NZCEL were obliged to adopt a test-oriented teaching approach, as this type of qualification required students to pass pre-designed unit standard assessment tasks. Back to back classes was a common form of teaching, and only full time teachers might have

breaks which included a twenty-minute morning break and a one-hour lunch break in a six-hour teaching day.

During this experience of teaching in different institutions in Christchurch, I also observed other teachers and talked to them about their professional practice and how they managed to juggle tasks in these work conditions. In one of the institutions, teachers were only offered academic support when the institution needed to introduce a new online platform that the organisation launched as a self-study tool for the students. This reminds me of ESOL teachers' inadequate work conditions, especially in the private sector (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Fitzsimons, 1997). Teachers' work conditions and challenges in PTEs in New Zealand seemed similar to what I experienced in the Middle East.

Despite being surrounded with challenges, I noticed that ESOL teachers' professional practice was interestingly associated with a stream of professional activities that were always active either when teachers apply them consciously or unconsciously. These teacher professional learning activities included informal discussions among teachers during the tea breaks which brought a lot of ideas and raised many questions about their actual practices. In addition, academic supervisors, in PTEs, suggested solutions to daily teaching problems to align teachers' performance with the institutional goals and policies. I was wondering whether this mixture of informal teacher professional learning activities was enough to shape their professional practice and whether teachers' understanding of the broader teaching context influences would also shape their professional practice.

In conclusion, this ESOL teaching journey in different contexts shaped my initial understanding of teachers' professional practice, but simultaneously posed questions about relationships between teacher professional practice, the close surrounding context, and the wider work milieu. This journey of learning about teaching and teachers' professional practice which started in The Middle East, and has been challenged by different contexts in New Zealand, directed me to directly seek answers from in-service teachers and learn about their real work life experiences. However, to allow teachers' voices to be heard in this research study, it was necessary to start by recalling all my experiences of private ESOL teaching and ESOL management inside and outside New Zealand. This research study aimed to mitigate the effects of preconceived ideas about private ESOL teaching to allow teachers' voices to guide my understanding of the phenomenon of ESOL teachers' professional practice in response to their work milieu in PTEs.

Overview of methodology

This is a qualitative phenomenological case study which discusses the professional practice of five ESOL post-school teachers in private training establishments in Christchurch, New Zealand. Although I explained my methodological choices in more detail in the methodology chapter, I chose to include a summary of the decisions I made throughout this research study. As I have been involved in private ESOL teaching and management for around fifteen years prior to this research study, I chose to start with practising bracketing (Van Manen, 2014) by recalling all my past experiences and setting them aside. Then, I allowed the fresh view of the phenomenon to emerge from the interwoven five case studies which presented a case study of ESOL teachers' practices in response to workplace specifically in private training establishments. This study utilised case study methodology as an intensive description of the phenomenon or the investigated social unit (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2008; S. B. Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Each participant was asked to attend three semi-structured interviews which were scheduled over a period of three months to nine months. In addition to this, I followed every interview with a follow up email to maintain the flow of data between the interviews.

Data collected from interviews and teachers' responses to my emails informed five teachers' narratives (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Narratives were intended to represent the stories of these five teachers through reviewing teachers' professional practice in response to their work milieu and how this impacts their choices and decision making at the workplace. Through the utilisation of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), key themes were identified in individual narratives through viewing every narrative and discussing the unique experiences of every participant. Then, across the five narratives, themes were identified to inform my understanding of the phenomenon of teachers' work lives in relation to their particular workplace milieu. Adopting this evolving methodology and a social constructivist epistemological stance (Creswell, 2013) towards the phenomenon facilitated the study aim to amplify and value the voices of ESOL teachers which seemed to be neglected or unheard.

The Focus of the study

As highlighted earlier the focus of this study is the private ESOL teaching sector in which the overarching research question is presented. In New Zealand, the recent revolutionary economic and social change brought many new industries, and created a growing need of trained and skilful hands that act as the backbone of the changing global labour market (Codd, 2005). New

Zealand, like many other countries, has post-school education on the top of its priorities, as education is believed to be able to create the human capital that would empower the national New Zealand economy (Abbott, 2006; Codd, 2005; McLaughlin, 2003; Morris, 2013; Timperley, 2008).

That being said, due to the increased demand for English language proficiency, private English language teaching (ELT) has driven a global industry that has flourished in many countries, especially the ones which speak English as their first languages such as England, Australia, and New Zealand. This industry serves almost all education sectors in these countries from elementary education to university. Either it is called higher education as in Canada and the UK (Gosling & Hannan, 2013; Kreber, 2013) or post-school education as in New Zealand and Australia (Skelton, 2007), It seems that this sector encompasses a large number of ESOL teachers.

In private training establishments in Christchurch, most teachers of English-to-speakers-of-other-languages (ESOL) merge into the teaching community, and strive to maintain a level of professionalism that satisfies their individual professional goals, their students and institutional needs (Day, 2017). Day (2017) argued that introducing these teachers in a one-line description is easy, but the complexities of their professional practice, learning about teaching while interacting with the surrounding influences was reported to be complicated (p. xi). Therefore, I chose the complexities of ESOL teachers' professional practice as the focus of this research project. Professional practice challenges in private ESOL teaching in New Zealand and globally, as reported in the literature, included swinging between professional obligations and teachers' own beliefs and practices maintaining educational and professional imperatives (Walker, 2014), coping with the pressing need of ESOL qualified teachers (Olsen, 2015, p. 5), and dealing with continuous tension caused by power relationships at the workplace (Liu & Xu, 2013).

In a few words, this research study focuses on teachers' professional practices in private training establishments in Christchurch, New Zealand. To achieve this aim, it was necessary to investigate teachers' professional practice as perceived by teachers and described in their narratives about their work life experiences of their immediate work context. In addition, this study also focuses on what teachers' narratives revealed about aspects of their wider work milieu such as ESOL commercialisation and teacher resilience in a business driven environment.

This study uses terms such as institutions, centres, PTEs interchangeably to refer to the private teaching establishments in the post-school education sector. Since PTEs call themselves schools or colleges on their websites and in their formal and informal communications, I chose to follow Walker's (2014) and the New Zealand Ministry of Education's term by calling them private training establishments (PTEs), or institutions to differentiate them from other ESOL providers in New Zealand such as government schools in the compulsory sector. Although this study accepts ESOL teaching in PTEs as a different category compared to ESOL teachers in the school education sector, I sometimes draw on literature from these sectors to enhance my understanding of ESOL teaching conditions in general.

A gap in the existing literature

Although ESOL teaching has been at the centre of researchers' attention, private ESOL teaching is still an under researched area. While some published literature focuses on the impact of teachers' performance on students' outcome, a few studies focus on teachers' perception of their own professional practice (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). In New Zealand, while most of the literature about post-school teachers explored universities and government funded organisation (Billot & Smith, 2008; Jesson & Smith, 2007), there is not much literature on private ESOL teaching in PTEs (Walker, 2013)

Internationally, the studies (Kim, Micek, & Grigsby, 2013; Longcope, 2009; Persell & Wenglinsky, 2004; Sun, 2010) which investigated ESOL teaching in commercialised contexts highlighted the differences between private and public ESOL teaching, and called for more research on private ESOL teaching and teachers' professional practice. Persell & Wenglinsky (2004) examined professional practice in higher education comparing for-profit to non-profit organisations and how this affected graduated students' civic engagement. They noted that private post-school institutions adopted the notion of education as an industry, and they aimed to meet economic goals at the expense of social ones. They also raised questions to be dealt with in further research studies, such as how post-school education juggles an institution's goals and their own professional practices. In addition, the participants of this study were limited to ESOL teachers' perception of the targeted phenomenon. Therefore, I chose to ask teachers about their perceptions of how institutions achieve their goals and strike a balance between them and the educational principles of the profession.

Kim, Micek, and Grigsby (2013) investigated principles and standards which define teachers' professionalism and success which they called *professional dispositions*. They highlighted the confusion among ESOL teacher educators about the qualities and dispositions which teachers need to succeed, and called for further research to describe what constitutes ESOL teachers' professional best practice. In this research study, I aim to describe teachers' perception of their professional practice which would help ESOL teacher educators design professional learning activities for pre as well as in-service ESOL teachers' learning.

In New Zealand, Fitzsimons (1997) described ESOL teachers' work conditions in the post-school sector in New Zealand as inadequate. He investigated PTEs in New Zealand in relation to their work conditions, accreditation, sources of funding, financial success, and range of provided courses. He also highlighted the challenges teachers' productivity faces under the pressure of the concept of PTEs as businesses. Fitzsimons' (1997) study illuminated the difficult teaching conditions in the private ESOL teaching institutions in New Zealand and called for further investigations of teachers' behaviours in a commercial work environment. Other studies which resonated with Fitzsimons' ideas included Walker's (2007, 2014) who stated that the area of professional practice in private ESOL administration and management is highly under researched. Walker (2007) affirmed that "little or nothing is known about how ELC (English Language Centre) staff, both teachers and non-teachers, perceive their service environment". My current study sheds light on teachers' perceptions of their immediate work environment as well as the broader work milieu.

After reviewing the highlighted studies, this research study can be considered as one of the few empirical studies which investigated teacher professional practice, work conditions in PTEs from a teacher perspective. This research study offers a unique contribution to the body of private ESOL teaching literature. The findings of this research study will be of interest to in-service teachers, ESOL teachers' professional development specialists, PTE managers, PTE owners, and anyone who is planning to investigate the relationship between business and education especially those aiming to provide a social good within commercial work conditions. While this study addresses ESOL post-school teachers in the private sector, its findings and recommendations can benefit ESOL teachers in the government sector and teachers of other subjects, as well.

An analogy: Who should own the donkey?

“Tie the donkey where the donkey’s owner wishes” This proverb, which I will never forget, has aroused my interest in exploring private ESOL teaching. I still remember when I was first challenged by the dynamics of work environment of private ESOL teaching. Like many other ESOL teachers, I started my career as an ESOL teacher in a private institution. To some extent, this saying summarised most of my experience grappling with inadequate work conditions in some of the private training establishments as a teacher and provoked my interest in conducting further investigations in this area as a researcher.

Back in 2010, I mentioned this proverb in a discussion with my manager about teacher professional learning and development (PLD). My manager was in charge of designing professional learning activities for more than 150 teachers in one of the universities in a gulf country. One day, the director of the institution decided to cancel a teacher professional learning event, and replaced it with exam invigilation. The cancelation of this event meant that ESOL teachers would not have the opportunity to participate in the yearly professional learning activities. As we heard about this immediate change, which left us no chance to reschedule the event, my manager rushed to the director’s office to convince him to keep the scheduled PLD event.

It did not last long until my manager came back to the office, and he mumbled something which I could not understand. Actually, his voice betrayed him, and he could not conceal his dissatisfaction. I understood that the director must have decided to give priority to exam invigilation over teachers’ professional learning activities. My manager felt handcuffed and had to accept the decision made by the higher management. We realised that this decision downplayed the role which professional learning plays to enhance teachers’ professional practice. It was also obvious that teachers’ professional learning would not win a battle against assessment administration or curriculum design.

Although I was also unhappy with the management decision, I was calm and literally said to him *tie the donkey where the donkey’s owner wishes*, and I said that in Arabic which he could not understand fully. This was just a hook, so I could start telling the story of this proverb.

Once there was a donkey which belonged to a farm owner, and there were farm workers who had to do farming duties. Farming duties included taking care of crops, producing the highest yield as well as feeding and taking care of the owner’s donkey. Since it was the owner’s donkey, obviously the farmers had no say about where to tie it. The farmers should only tie the

donkey where the farm owner wanted. The farm owner was not necessarily knowledgeable about running a farm, he was only investing his money in farming. When the owner asked the farmers to tie his donkey in a specific place, it did not matter whether the farmers agreed or disagreed with his decision. The farmers did not have the right to decide on what was good for the farm. They were thought to lack the owner's wisdom and just needed to tie the donkey where the owner wished.

Drawing an analogy between the farm and ESOL teaching was necessary to present the metaphor of the donkey as the irreversible and ill-considered decisions of the top management, the farm owner as the director, and the farmers as the two of us. This metaphor represented a realistic description of ESOL teaching a) political tensions such as power relationships at the workplace, b) historical perceptions presented in prioritising assessment, and c) social influences which surrounded ESOL teachers' practices. Thus, the question of who owns the donkey is inevitable. Who should own decision making in post-school education in general, and in particular in commercialised environments? The same question has been raised about public education by Biesta (2018) who reflected on the current status of education, and stated that education has reached a serious condition which requires flipping the current educational system, if there is one. He also noted that "teachers have suffered and [are] still suffering from the top-down micro-management of their work, it could be argued that they are the legitimate owners of education and that the system should be flipped in their hands". However, he concluded that the ownership of education should not be the stakeholders' main concern, but the actual practices which direct education goals to the benefit of teachers, students, and the whole society.

I personally believe that teachers should be the real captains of industry in education, and this study is adopting a similar position to Biesta's towards the argument of teachers' right to own education. The study essentially aims to present the voices of five in-service ESOL teachers through representing their work life experiences. Thus, I can shed some light on their work conditions and professional practices in PTEs without imposing any of my above mentioned preconceived assumptions about private ESOL teaching.

The organisation of chapters

This thesis constitutes ten chapters. This chapter opens up the thesis and presents an overview of this research study. It starts by describing the study background, purpose, and rationale. It also introduces the research study context, as well as my contextual personal narrative as a

researcher who was engaged in the field of private ESOL education. It also briefly describes my methodological choices and research design as well as the gap in the existing literature about private ESOL teaching.

Chapter Two presents a review of the relevant literature. Firstly, I present the research studies, which discuss contextual influences of private ESOL teaching. I start with studies which describe private ESOL teaching internationally. After that, I report the studies that focus on the New Zealand context. Then I address studies which highlight PTEs as a work environment and report those which discuss the business characteristics of ESOL teaching. After that, I present literature around adult learning theories followed by some studies which tackle teachers' professional learning choices. The review of relevant literature provides theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guides the discussion of participants' narratives, and highlights the gap in the literature. Therefore, I claim the need for further investigations into the business values and educational principles of private ESOL teaching.

Chapter Three describes the study design and my methodological choices. It presents the theoretical foundations of the study and how the qualitative nature of the study suggested an interpretative approach. It also explains my interest in transcendental phenomenology and how I engaged in the bracketing process. It also gives a detailed description of the rationale behind choosing grounded theory and case study methods. In addition, it describes the research site, participants, and data collection tools and procedures. The last sections of this chapter describe data analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

In Chapter Four, I provide a detailed description of my personal experience of gaining and maintaining access to research sites as an emerging researcher. I chose to conduct my research study in New Zealand, and I was a stranger to the New Zealand private ESOL teaching context. In this chapter, I report the challenges and tensions associated with my attempts to gain and maintain access to PTEs. This chapter presents gaining and maintaining access to research sites as socially situated and relational activity which requires identity negotiation, and building strong professional relationships with gatekeepers and participants.

Chapters Five to Nine present the five narratives of the participant teachers. The narratives are representations of work life stories of the participants as described by them in the interviews and interpreted by me. I represent each teacher's stories in one narrative which is followed by a discussion of the emerging themes. At the end of every chapter, I highlight the particulars of every case and provide an analytic discussion of themes.

The discussion of recurring themes and the conclusion are presented in Chapter Ten. In this chapter, I intentionally step back from the narratives to consider how the five narratives contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon. The chapter identifies the new knowledge contributed by this research study, discusses the implications, and makes recommendations for ESOL in-service teachers, institutions' managers, business owners, and ESOL teacher educators.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review major published literature and theorisations which I found relevant to the topic of this research study. This literature review facilitated the development of my conceptual understanding of the investigated phenomenon of ESOL teachers' professional practice in private training establishments in response to their work milieu in Christchurch. My understanding of relevant literature has been as evolving as the nature of this phenomenological research study. I chose to adopt a flexible epistemological stance towards the phenomenon of teachers' professional practice in private training establishments by allowing participants' narratives to engage with my understanding of reviewed literature. This aligns with the statement of Taylor and others (2016) who argued that "In a qualitative study, you cannot be sure what literature might be relevant to your study until you have completed your research" (p. 58). Although I chose to adopt a classical grounded theory approach (explained in detail in Chapter Three) by allowing teachers' voices to guide my understanding of the targeted phenomenon, in this chapter I briefly describe my personal experience of reviewing relevant literature here, so that the reader can form an overall view of how my understanding of challenges which teachers might face in commercial environments has evolved.

In particular, I focused on key concepts which described the professional practice and how it can mediate and is mediated by the teaching milieu. This chapter also reviews published literature about teaching ESOL as business and how this created particular work conditions. This chapter further reviews varied opinions about whether educational principles can reconcile with business values in private education organisations. Finally, I briefly review literature about teachers' learning within their organisations, and their in-service professional learning choices. While literature about some other aspects of ESOL teachers' experiences might not be tackled in much detail in this chapter such as teachers' agency, identity and beliefs, they are explained and discussed in the discussion sections of each case study. It was a conscious decision to move these sections to the narratives chapters to avoid repetition and highlight the particulars of every participant teacher's work life experiences.

ESOL teachers' professional practice in PTEs

The relationship between professional practice and contextual factors in education has been discussed in a number of national as well as international research studies (Hasnat, 2017; Nieto Angel, 2018; Tisi, 2019) which strongly connected teachers' professional practice to internal

and external influences such as teacher identity, students' satisfaction, institution management, families' engagement as well as ethical and emotional influences. What constitutes ESOL teachers' professional practice is important to this study, as it illuminates my understanding of the phenomenon of teachers' perceptions of their own professional practice in response to their work milieu. This research project views teachers' professional practice as the set of standards, behaviours, skills and knowledge which facilitate their daily work duties. These standards might vary from one tertiary organisation to the other, but they generally fall into four main domains including teachers' professional knowledge, actual teaching practices, professional relationships, and their understanding of influences in their teaching milieu.

Reviewed literature (Ruth, 2018; Walker, 2014) about ESOL teachers' professional practice highlighted the controversial and varied perspectives of how influences were defined and how they mediated teachers' professional practice in private training establishments. The range of perspectives in these studies provided a solid conceptual framework which guided the discussion of themes emerging from participant teachers' narratives in this research study. It is noteworthy that private ESOL teaching has been much practiced, but less systematically investigated in research studies, and therefore literature discussing ESOL teachers' professional practice in private establishments is scarce (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Walker, 2011b), so I decided to draw on literature from public schools and universities as well.

Warman (2015) investigated the evaluation of teaching quality in higher education with a focus on teacher's professional practice. She defined teachers' professional practice as related to three key concepts: teachers' professional knowledge, their sense of autonomy and their ethical responsibility. While teacher autonomy and ethical responsibility can be considered as internal aspects, there is literature (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Herbert et al., 2018; Mockler, 2012) that tied teacher professional knowledge to the wider teaching context, and defined teachers' professional knowledge as a combination of content and pedagogical knowledge which included teachers' formal and informal professional learning activities, reflective practices, teacher observation, and teachers' past experiences. This mixture of interrelated aspects highlights the internal and external dimensions of teachers' professional practice and asserts my understanding of its complexity.

Freeman and Johnson's (1998) assumptions about teachers' professional knowledge underlines the particular nature of their professional practice and how it is highly connected to complexities of human interactions and the teaching context in which it exists. They

emphasised the notion that teachers are not empty vessels, as they come to the profession with their own personal professional knowledge and beliefs; this presents their professional practice as socially negotiated and continually reconstructed in response to the surrounding environment (p. 400).

Hill and Thrupp (2019) stated that the past two decades have witnessed a remarkable shift in what it means to be a teacher in New Zealand due to the social, political, and technological changes. They also highlighted the ongoing change in teachers' pedagogical knowledge and tied this to the surrounding conditions including the global developments which interact with the local influences and shape teachers' professional practice (p. xiv). This brought to the surface the economic challenges, especially when it comes to private ESOL teaching.

As stated above teachers' professional practice is not a simple process of planning and executing lessons. It is a difficult and complicated process that requires intellectual and emotional skills (M. Mills, 2019; Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark, & Warne, 2002; Warman, 2015). It requires a set of cognitive and metacognitive skills (Borg, 2005) to be able to negotiate with teacher beliefs, curriculum deliberation, students' satisfaction, and institutional values. However, Walker (2014) asserted that teachers' professional practice in PTEs has its particular nature, and this has created a debate about private ESOL teaching *dual nature* of business values and education principles. Teachers in PTEs need to juggle their educational principles and ESOL teaching as a commercial activity in the time of neoliberalism (Bowl, 2017).

While Connell (2009) highlighted the tensions brought to teachers' professionalism when defined within a neoliberal view, Walker (2014) described private ESOL teaching in New Zealand as similar to providing a professional educational service to students which requires establishing ethical and professional standards and simultaneously turning a financial profit. Therefore, teachers in this field who consider teaching as a profession, believe that this profession updates itself continuously and requires a continuous change in teachers' knowledge, skills and professional practices. He also argued that while teachers in PTEs are tasked with classroom teaching, assessment, and curriculum deliberation, they must contribute to the institutional business goals such as student retention and revenue maximising (p. 160).

Interestingly, scholars (Evers & Kneyber, 2016; Ruth, 2014, 2018) in other fields of education, and specifically in the public sector, would differ regarding imposing business-like techniques into ESOL teachers' professional practices, and viewed neoliberal change as a way of

minimising teachers' roles and voices. Evers and Kneyber (2016) argued that “in the neoliberal perspective, the teacher is viewed as a trained monkey”; they also argued that accepting these neoliberal influences would put teachers under the pressure of responding to whatever the institutions or students request by following the widespread teaching methods to achieve externally determined goals (p. 3). This business driven attitude towards post-school education was criticised on the basis that it destroys education rather than developing it. The research of Ruth, (2017) raised the importance of reconsidering “education in the Wall Street era”, and argued that “education based on market principles is fundamentally incoherent and cannot deliver”. In this context, he used the United States' unsuccessful experiences of education commodification as an indicator that New Zealand would not get different results when it replicated the same educational strategy. While these views of taking business out of education could be presented by a number of ESOL teachers and researchers, there are those who had the chance to work in well managed and commercially focused PTEs (Walker, 2014).

Bowel (2017) stated that “While global shifts in the way education is viewed are unarguably impacting on adult education, history and culture, as well as socioeconomic circumstances, are likely to influence the extent to which adult education is prioritised and resourced”. If this is what we know about higher education in general, what do we know about private ESOL teaching in particular? Most of the published research studies view ESOL teachers' professional practice in PTEs as merely dealing with their immediate context challenges. However, participant teachers' narratives in this research study presented teachers' professional practice as a complex and multi-layered intellectual activity which requires skills of entering into negotiations with teaching materials, students' needs, teachers' own beliefs, as well as economic and sociocultural influences.

Wette (2010) conducted a longitudinal study, and investigated ESOL teachers' professional practice in relation to their professional knowledge and curriculum making in different contexts including New Zealand. The study explored how aspects of teachers' professional practice, such as students' feedback and work context, contributed to shaping the instructional practice of ESOL teachers. She also stated that professional practice is a cognitive process which is connected to teachers' goals, learners' motivation, and classroom environment. Her study of ESOL teachers' professional practice identified two interrelated dimensions of teachers' work context, as she found out that they deal with a micro-context which included their classroom and institution, and simultaneously grapple with a macro-context which encompasses external influences such as socioeconomic aspects.

The research studies and published literature reviewed above defined my initial understanding of private ESOL teaching dynamics and the surrounding environment. Participants' narratives presented constant and strong messages that the boundaries of teachers' professional practice require further investigations.

Private training establishments as work contexts

Internationally, the private ESOL teaching milieu has been highlighted as a key driver of the way ESOL teachers know, think, believe, and do (Borg, 2005, 2015). Liu and Xu (2013) in a study conducted in a Chinese university, noted that the teaching context might affect social, economic, political and professional dimensions of ESOL teachers' lives including decisions they make to get engaged in activities to enhance their professional practice. They also highlighted that ESOL teaching in private institutes remained a black box. Other studies focused on ESOL teacher learning in relation to learner outcomes, teacher role in institutional change, and in-service education in both school and post-school sectors (Frost, 2012; Fullan & Ballew, 2004; Rubin, 1971).

In New Zealand, most of the literature about post-school teachers explores government funded post-school organisations (Billot & Smith, 2008; Jesson & Smith, 2007). The studies which investigated non-government organisations (Skyrme, 2008) and specifically ESOL teaching in private training establishments (Walker, 2013) are scarce. We still do not know much about the private ESOL teaching contexts, what is the ESOL teachers' perception of their own professional practice in PTEs? What are their professional choices when it comes to learning about teaching, and who is taking control of their professional learning?

The study of teachers' professional practice in PTEs in New Zealand should not be separated from either the surrounding environment which is used as a synonym to *teaching context* in this research study, or the broader teaching context which includes economic and sociocultural aspects of ESOL as business and described in this study as *work milieu*. PTEs in New Zealand, as suggested in a number of research studies (Fitzsimons, 1997; Walker, 2007, 2013, 2014), present a particular work milieu for ESOL teachers in relation to the pedagogical, ethical and socioeconomic aspects of teachers' work life.

Fitzsimons (1997) explored the working conditions of teachers in PTEs in relation to the government policies which define teachers' teaching conditions in PTEs. Although he described PTEs as part of the New Zealand government strategy for economic productivity, he stated that teachers' work conditions in PTEs are less than adequate, as he believed that PTEs

do not have the dedicated budgets to attract experienced teachers nor support their employed staff to develop professionally (p. 175). He also highlighted that PTEs apply performance based payments to teachers, as PTE training is defined as an industrial activity which means payments can be tied to productivity (p. 178). This teacher remuneration system was reported to affect teacher professional performance and job retention rates in an overwhelming work environment such as PTEs. Fitzsimons' study presented an overview of teachers' socioeconomic work conditions in PTEs and this overview was important for my understanding of their professional practice in these particular work circumstances.

Farmer (2006) examined approaches to ESOL teaching which he thought to encompass aspects of accountable professionalism. Among these approaches, he discussed ELT as a service industry in which he accepted students as clients in a *market-led service*. He also suggested that students in this context would pay fees, and in return, expect a specific quality which requires extra services and standards that add to the complexity of teachers' work in these private organisations. Similarly, Walker (2014) employed a service view to investigate the tensions between business values and educational principles in PTEs, and suggested the need to have the *market-oriented teacher* through the inclusion of some basic business principles in ESOL teachers' training programmes. He also recommended further empirical studies to advance the understanding of the relationship between business and education in private organisations.

However, ESOL private teaching contexts pose challenges for teachers to operate and develop professionally. Wette (2010) identified these contextual constraints with which ESOL teachers would have to grapple with, and described them as micro and macro contexts. In her description of curriculum deliberation in the micro-context, she described two types of work contexts as *high-constraint* and *low-constraint* work contexts. She noted that at high constraint workplaces, teachers are not allowed much autonomy and have to work within top down decision making, whereas, in low constraint environments teachers are autonomous and included in a bottom up decision making process. In addition, Burns and de Silva Joyce (2007) described other teaching contexts that can be placed at different points between these two endpoints. This suggests the possibility that work contexts are dynamic and can change from one position to the other in regards to mediating and being mediated by teachers' professional practice.

ESOL teaching as business

It seems that the argument about the privatisation and commodification of education would not settle down in the time of neoliberalism, and will keep sparking off debates on structural changes in higher education for a long time. While some scholars rejected the ideas of bringing business values into education (Ruth, 2017, 2018; Wolf, 2017), others argued that *academic capitalism* represented in commodification and privatisation of higher education is inevitable as business-like behaviours and neoliberal policies are evident in higher education (Kauppinen, 2014; Mirowski, 2011; Sappey, 2005). This section reviews literature about both views of higher education commodification. Then it focuses on the New Zealand perspective of ESOL teaching in PTEs within the commercial context and as a business.

The research of Ruth (2018) challenged the neoliberal perspective of higher education in New Zealand by arguing that education is a social endeavour which is strongly connected to social justice and indigenous epistemologies; thus, it cannot be treated as a business. He criticised the concept of viewing students as paying customers or clients, as he affirmed that it would negatively affect educational goals and relationships among students, teachers and the whole society. Therefore, he rejected the idea of reducing a student to just a consumer and knowledge to a *deliverable* object. He also used the metaphor of *knowledge as pizza*, *lecturer as a courier* to raise his observation of the *McDonaldisation of education*, and refer to attempts of achieving educational goals under the commercial constraints, as he affirmed that education cannot be a *deliverable* like other services. He argued that education is connected to the pursuit of wisdom (pp. 203-219). It is noteworthy that Ruth (2018) differentiated between higher education and training as two different types of acquiring knowledge. He contended that, unlike education, training is associated with acquiring skills rather than wisdom, and this identifies training as similar to paying someone to teach a student how to build a house which does not count as education.

From a significantly different perspective, Kauppinen (2014) discussed the process of commodification of knowledge in higher education and advocated the dual nature of higher education which reflects education commercialisation, as he noted that higher education has “some features of public goods and can be subject to commodification”. This means universities’ actions of selling packages of knowledge, in the form of teaching or lecturing, to international students to create revenue might justify the existence of what is known as academic capitalism (p. 399). Therefore, he affirmed that due to academic capitalism, teaching

would be guided by other values which are determined by student-customers rather than being purely directed to knowledge transfer and wisdom cultivation in students. Education commodification in this context refers to institutional attempts to increase the quality of education to achieve students' satisfaction. Kauppinen (2014) stated that the commodification of higher education is still an under researched topic and recommended conducting both theoretical and empirical research studies on it. Reviewing these significantly different perspectives of education in business oriented environments highlighted a gap in the literature, and provided a framework which guided both my understanding of the targeted phenomenon and the discussion of participants' narratives in this research study.

Focusing on private training establishments in New Zealand, Walker's research (Walker, 2000, 2011a, 2013, 2014) investigated private ESOL teaching in a commercial work milieu, and supported the notion that PTEs have a dual nature which combines educational professionalism and business concepts such as customer service, revenue maximising, and client satisfaction. Walker (2007) examined ESOL teaching and management in PTEs and specifically English language centres as private work environments. He noted that PTEs represent a commercial model of post-school education which would require a different organisational management system in comparison with public schools, as these PTEs provide English language teaching to fee paying international students and are privately owned by individuals or post-school institutions. This study examined thirty English language centres in New Zealand for staff perceptions of service climate in private ESOL teaching establishments. His findings showed that PTEs have adopted private business values and acted as service as well as educational providers. Their staff, including teachers, developed a generally positive perception of business values in this particular work environment of private ESOL teaching.

Walker (2007) reported some teachers' perception of negative aspects of private ESOL teaching, such as limited resources, work pressure, institutional demands, and managerial approaches. In addition, he noted teachers' perceptions of students as clients, student satisfaction, client focused and ethical responsibility were all positive. Walker's conceptualisation supported the *dual nature* of PTEs as he argued that "They are institutions that employ trained, qualified teachers, and are subject to some sort of official regulation in terms of the quality of the educational experience they provide their student clients. But they are also service organisations that operate in a competitive environment, and are expected to generate a profit for their owners". Walker's ideas provided a framework for private ESOL teaching dynamics, and he noted that so many questions remained unanswered about teachers'

professional practice in private ESOL teaching establishments and he called for further research in this area. He also suggested that there are questions about the extent to which PTEs can provide a public benefit within a commercial environment, and these questions guided my discussions of participants' stories on their perceptions of work lives in PTEs.

In-service learning

Literature about adult learning emerged as essential to my understanding of the phenomenon of ESOL teachers' professional practice in PTEs. All participants of this study are adult ESOL teachers, however adopting different learning models, the majority of their students are also adult learners. Even though some students are teenagers, they study English in adult learning settings such as PTEs. Teachers in this study are facilitating adult students' learning, and get simultaneously engaged in their own professional learning. Therefore, it was essential to review literature that discussed adult learning at workplaces.

Merriam (2018) stated that the way adults learn has come to the attention of researchers only in 1990s, and she emphasised the role surrounding sociocultural influences play in shaping teacher professional practice. Others (Kwon & Nicolaides, 2017; McClory, Read, & Labib, 2017) noted that adults' learning is not a linear process that can simply be described in a set of consecutive stages without paying attention to its evolving nature. This evolving learning, especially in-service learning, is highly connected to organisations and teachers in these contexts. Teachers who have to grapple with social, cultural, economic and psychological aspects of their work milieu. This has raised questions, which this study attempts to answer, about the complexity and multi-dimensionality of in-service professional learning in relation to the work milieu.

Adults' in-service learning within their work organisations has been presented in the literature as a construct of their professional practice, specifically how individuals' learning mediates and is mediated by organisational learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978, 1996; Kwon & Nicolaides, 2017; McClory et al., 2017). Argyris and Schon (1978) stated that individuals' learning could be independent from the collaborative learning of the whole organisation to the extent that some individuals learn what the organisation cannot learn; they highlighted the paradox of the gap between what individuals learn and what organisations can learn simultaneously (p. 9). They also noted that organisational learning is normally associated with teachers' attempts to detect and correct errors in their professional practice, and highlighted the organisation's role in facilitating or hindering individuals' learning.

However, McClory et al. (2017) defined an organisation as a group of individuals working together through one structural system, and normally with a common purpose, and argued that an individual's learning is strongly connected to and can lead to organisational learning. Therefore, they argued that although individuals' learning varies according to their capabilities of processing information, their learning approaches could be affected by social and political factors that included beliefs and practices of individuals and behaviours of colleagues around them (p. 1326). In addition, they raised questions around the readiness and willingness of organisations to question their policies, values, and practices (p. 1326). The design of this study was informed by these different perspectives of teachers' in-service learning, and the discussions of participants' professional practice were consequently viewed as a part of the organisation's learning as a whole.

Argyris and Schon (1974) introduced the terms single loop and double loop learning to the field of organisational learning towards the end of the twentieth century (Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1996). Their definition of single loop learning included detecting and correcting errors in the light of the organisation's present policies to achieve its present objectives. Kwon and Nicolaides (2017) noted that single loop learning is concerned with the most effective ways to complete organisations' goals under the guidance of their present norms and policies with the focus on the nature of doing by identifying problems and finding effective ways to do things, rather than questioning the reasons behind the problem itself (Kwon & Nicolaides, 2017). Therefore, the emphasis of reflection in single loop learning is on strategies of learning and how to make them better or more effective without questioning the norms and policies that present the assumptions about how work is or supposed to be completed (Kwon & Nicolaides, 2017; Smith, 2001).

Other literature discussed double loop learning which is based on detecting and correcting errors in association with modifying the underlying assumptions, norms, policies and objectives and challenging them (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Kwon & Nicolaides, 2017). Smith (2001) claimed that in double loop learning, individuals question the process of framing and enhancing learning systems, and he explained double loop learning through Aristotle's notion of technical and practical thoughts: "the former *single loop learning* involves following routines and some sort of present plan, and is both less risky for the individual and the organisation, and affords greater control. The latter *double loop learning* is more creative and reflexive, and involves consideration of notions of the good" (Smith, 2001, p. 5). In addition, Kwon and Nicolaides (2017) aligned double loop learning with the individual's cognitive

framework, and viewed it as “a total reframing of our cognitive schema, which could lead to fundamental changes in our behaviour” (p. 88).

Trying to go beyond the cognitive dimension of double loop learning, some literature refers to the emotional and cultural dimension of learning that included organisational capacity for curiosity, compassion and courage (Bateson, 2000; Kwon & Nicolaidis, 2017; McClory et al., 2017). Thus, double and triple loop learning take place when individuals make a conscious effort to the way of their being which influence the way of their knowing and doing, as well (Kwon & Nicolaidis, 2017). As cited in Kwon and Nicolaidis (2017), Bateson (1972) presents four levels of learning that explain the notion of teacher professional learning within organisations. These four levels of learning are “Learning 0 is a response to stimuli, but no change is made accordingly. Learning I is a change within the same set of alternatives, so this is similar to Argyris and Schon’s single loop learning. Learning II is about changing the set of alternatives and sheds light on the way meaning is given to behaviour by punctuating or organising experiences differently; thus, this is comparable with double loop learning.” (Kwon & Nicolaidis, 2017, p. 90). Thus triple loop learning, Learning III of Bateson, was linked to reflection in action which was considered as a recreation of oneself through stressing the individuals’ capacities to reshape their intentions, purposes and motives. In conclusion, in-service teacher professional practice and professional learning could be represented as interdependent forms of learning that seem complex and mirror teachers’ momentous learning experiences (p. 91). Grappling with these philosophical underpinnings of in-service professional practice guided my understanding of how teacher professional practice mediates and is mediated by the surrounding work milieu.

Teachers’ professional learning choices

The notion of teachers’ being responsible for their professional learning and development can be found in many of Dewey’s (1897, 1913) writings, such as *My Pedagogic Creed* and *Professional Spirit among Teachers*. However, post-school teachers’ perspectives of taking charge of their PLD and its impact on their collective efficacy is hardly presented in the literature.

One study, conducted in New Zealand post-school institutions, investigated post-school education teachers’ experiences of e-learning among teachers and support staff. In this study, Stein et al. (2011) used a phenomenographic approach to collect post-school teachers’ expressed experiences of e-learning and e-learning professional development. The findings of

this study were driven by 177 post-school teachers' views, and suggested that teachers' perceptions of in-service learning included accepting it: a) as training, b) as opening up possibilities, c) as collaboration and d) as relevant and purposeful activities (Stein, Shephard, & Harris, 2011). Reviewing this study serves to provide an image of post-school teachers' need of continuous PLD activities, and explains some of the methods through which teachers maintain their professional learning.

A study that targeted more than one thousand participant teachers in a number of secondary schools in New Zealand suggested teachers' in-service learning as an essential part of educational reform and change (Starkey et al., 2009). This enhanced my understanding of education reform in New Zealand, as it reported some dynamics of teachers' professional practice such as networking, personalised learning, bottom up facilitation, and activities assessment. Reviewing the above mentioned studies has expanded my understanding of what constructs the professional knowledge of ESOL post-school teachers, and the extent to which post-school ESOL teacher educators need to develop strategies and training programmes which mirror the complexity of their work environment.

On the other hand, internationally, there are some studies that studied PLD controlled by teachers and its impact on teaching and teacher learning. In general, most of these studies were conducted in schools, a different context, compared to post-school education. However, I refer to some of these studies, as they might support my understanding of post-school education teachers' background in Christchurch. A small scale qualitative study (Van Eekelen et al., 2006) investigated in-service teachers' will to learn and examines teachers' development in the workplace. This research study examined a total of twenty-eight experienced participant teachers who were working on a PLD project that required shifting from a traditional teaching role to a more teacher-oriented coaching role. The results of this study showed three various manifestations of the will to learn among participants, as teachers could be distinguished as: a) those who do not see the need to learn, b) those who wonder how to learn, and c) those who are eager to learn. Various teachers' perceptions towards change in their professional practice guided my preparation for the semi-structured interview questions.

Another qualitative large scale study conducted in England by (Pedder, James, & MacBeath, 2005) discussed the question of "how do teachers value and practice professional learning?". This study targeted thirty-two primary and secondary teachers, and the researchers received 1018 completed questionnaires from teachers and school managers. The results of this study

suggest that as long as teachers can practice classroom learning, and receive institutional support, education quality improves at the school despite any possible risks. Therefore, classrooms need to become crucibles of learning for both students and their teachers. Reviewing this study is useful as it highlights teachers' points of view and valued their voices. Pedder et al. (2005) claimed that teacher learning is an embedded feature of classroom practices.

Summary

This chapter has provided an account of how literature presented aspects of teachers' professional practice: whether achieving educational goals is possible or not under the pressure of business values, private training establishments as their close work context, and ESOL teachers' decisions when they get engaged in professional learning.

The review of international and national literature provided theoretical and conceptual frameworks which, along with my understanding of their reported experiences, guided the discussion of emerging themes in their narratives. In addition, the reviewed studies highlighted the gap in the literature and suggested the need for further investigations in different aspects of private ESOL teaching professional practice such as in-service professional learning and development, the relationship between revenue generating and social good, the management of ESOL teaching in a commodified environment, and teachers' decisions in response to their wider work milieu.

Chapter Three: Methodology

“I encourage qualitative researchers to consider jumping and straddling multiple points across the field of qualitative methods – consciously, and actively.”

(Ellingson, 2013)

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand ESOL teachers' perceptions of their own professional practice in private ESOL teaching establishments in response to their work milieu. I chose to explore this particular context of private ESOL teaching in Christchurch as ESOL teachers' professional practice in private training establishments presents relatively uncharted waters for researchers, especially when being investigated from teachers' perspectives. Teachers' decision making about their professional practice in this specific context seems complex, as there are various influences which mediate change in their practices and reshape their perceptions of the surrounding environment. Such influences also mediated the decisions I, as a researcher, made to study them. Therefore, this study aimed to answer the following overarching research question:

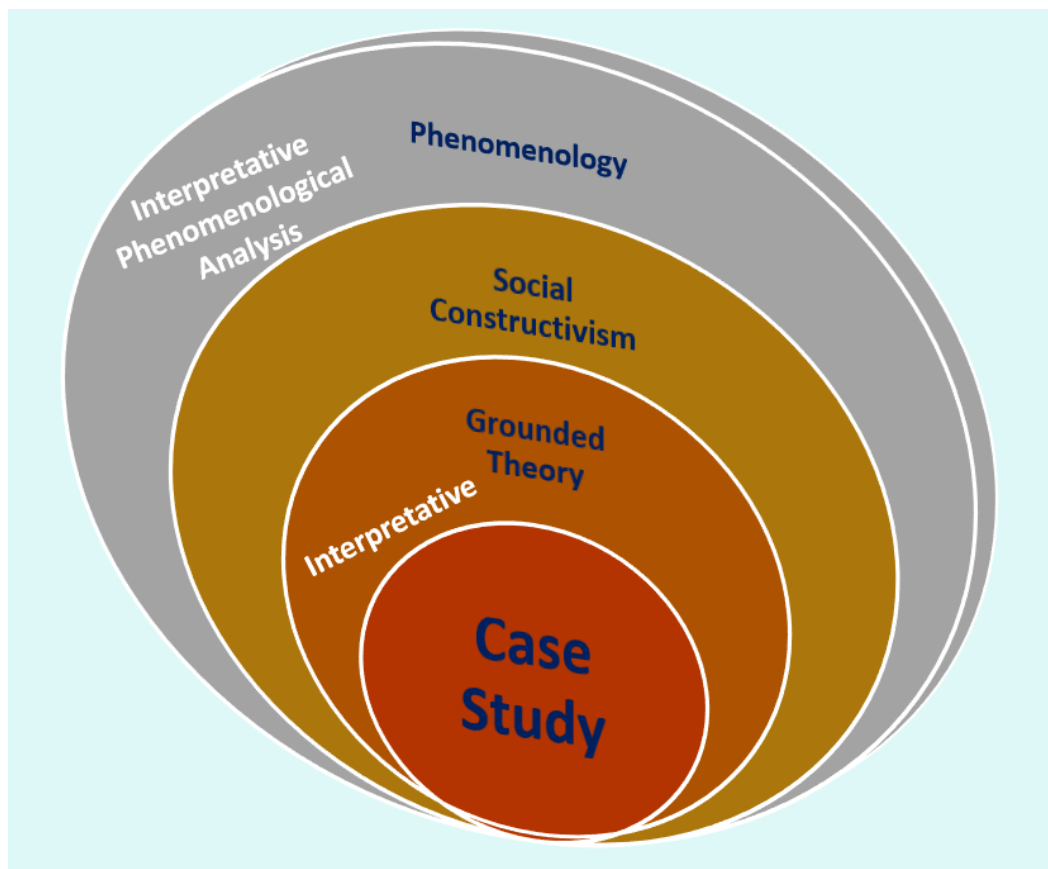
How do English-to-speakers-of other-languages teachers in private training establishments identify and address challenges of their own professional practice?

This question gave rise to the following subsidiary questions:

- What are teachers' perceptions of the private ESOL teaching work milieu?
- What are ESOL teachers' work life experiences in private training establishments?
- How do ESOL teachers engage with their work milieu and solve its associated problems?

To answer the above mentioned research questions, Figure 3.1 describes my methodological choices which facilitated data collection and analysis. These methodological choices are described in detail in this chapter.

Figure 3.1: Methodological choices.



The following sections describe in detail the theoretical foundation of this study, and my methodological choices. This chapter also explains how a range of interrelated research methods and theories have informed my decisions about the design of this research study. Then, it describes the relationships between research sites, participants, data collection and data analysis. Finally, trustworthiness and ethical considerations are discussed.

Theoretical foundation and methodological choices

The evolving and naturalistic nature of my study guided my choice of a qualitative research paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) defined qualitative research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the word visible, and these practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations” (p. 3). Chapters from chapter Five to Nine are narratives in which I seek to provide representations of participants’ perceptions of their professional practice as reported in their description of their work life experiences.

The qualitative nature of this study suggested social constructivism’s philosophical underpinnings to inform its broad design. Basically, social constructivists note that the

generation of meaning is the product of interaction with the human community (Crotty, 1998; Dewey, 1963; Vygotsky, 1980). My choice of social constructivism was directed by two main influences. The first was my personal passion to understand how ESOL teachers socially construct and reconstruct meanings in response to their work context, while the second was my understanding of philosophical underpinnings of social constructivism that valued the acceptance of multiple realities as noted by Creswell (2013). This suited my intention to grapple with the complexity of authentic situations and resist the dominance of knowing hierarchies in the field of private ESOL teaching. Therefore, social constructivism informed my choice of an interpretative qualitative research approach to “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

It is noteworthy that while social constructivism shaped my epistemological position, a number of interrelated theories such as grounded theory, activity theory, transcendental phenomenology, and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) have affected the decisions I made about procedures of gathering, organising, and analysing data. The design of this research study was always evolving, so I needed to frequently revise my plans and techniques of data collection and analysis as well as gaining and maintaining access as discussed in Chapter Four.

This interpretative qualitative approach resonates with grounded theory research. To understand teachers’ professional practice in PTEs in a systematic and unbiased manner, I decided to talk to teachers directly to understand their interpretations of their context and how they affected their professional practice including teaching practices and interacting with the surrounding social influences. It was my conscious decision to learn from their answers rather than arbitrarily imposing a specific theory on them. Thus, the grounded theory presented as a flexible but systematic method (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019), which informed and guided data collection in this research study. Although grounded theory has evolved in practice since it was first introduced in 1967, I adopted the basic procedures of Corbin and Strauss (1990) who argued that the procedures of grounded theory were designed to “develop a well-integrated set of concepts that provide a thorough theoretical explanation of social phenomena under study. A grounded theory should explain as well as describe. It may also implicitly give some degree of predictability, but only with regard to specific conditions” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 5).

To understand ESOL teachers' interpretations of their professional practice, I drew on concepts of activity theory as a sociocultural lens that viewed teachers as situated beings in their sociocultural context and explored how their perceptions have affected the nature of activities they were engaged in. Engeström (2001) argued that the individual's agency and the society cannot be separated; understanding one of them requires considering the other (p. 134). Therefore, considering various dimensions of the private ESOL teaching context added to the complexity of teachers' professional practice and required multiple lenses to view it.

Activity theory facilitated my examination of the relationships between the influencing aspects of the work environment and the activities teachers, as acting subjects, chose to get engaged in to face work challenges. For example, activity theory was employed in this study as a tool to highlight the complexity, richness, and multifaceted nature of teachers' agency which mediated and was mediated by the activity system of the surrounding work context. Thus, teachers' practices were viewed as "a moving target, not reducible to conscious short term goals" (Engeström, 1999, 2001), as they were always responsive to the surrounding environment represented in students, curriculum, colleagues and institutional policies. I also drew on phenomenology as a meaning-giving method which broadly informed my decisions to seek individual teachers' understanding of the phenomenon of teachers taking charge of their professional practices. Robert and Sari (2003) noted that "researchers in the phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in a particular situation" (p. 25).

Applying a collation of research theories and empirical tools in a qualitative research study is not unique to this study. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated that qualitative researchers commonly apply a wide range of interconnected interpretative practices, as each of these practices allows them to view the researched phenomenon differently, as they noted that "qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials case study; personal experiences; introspections; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural text and production; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (p. 4). In this research study, I chose to investigate a slice of the phenomenon that describes the changes in ESOL teachers' practice which resulted from grappling with aspects of their work milieu from the points of view of five ESOL teachers. This investigation also took place in a capsule of time and was bounded by Christchurch private training establishments. This research project is a broadly

phenomenological case study which represents teachers' perceptions of their professional practice in PTEs.

In summary, I needed to draw on aspects of social constructivism, phenomenology, grounded theory, and activity theory in order to carry out an interpretative approach towards the phenomenon of understanding teachers' perceptions of their work environment, then I chose to step out, so I could interpret their experiences and describe their understandings of their wider work milieu.

Interpretative Approach

In this research study, my aims included illuminating key aspects of the ESOL teaching in PTEs, and investigating teachers' personal experiences. This resonates with various theorists (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; S. B. Merriam & Grenier, 2019) who have noted that researchers' philosophical stances decide on their specific research design. Taylor, Bogdan and De Vault (2016) also described qualitative research as the "broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data"; in particular, I drew on the evolving characteristics of qualitative research such as its interpretativeness, openness to multiple realities, inductiveness, and its naturalistic procedures.

Realising the variety of surrounding realities and being open to these multiple realities was very important for designing this research study. For instance, participants' responses in the interviews highlighted the variety of interrelated influences that affected their professional practice including business owners, academic managers, and teachers' own beliefs. There appeared to be differences among the views of business owners who give priority to business flow and teachers who worry about their professional identities and responsibilities. Although my study investigated the phenomenon from a teacher's perspective, my understanding was formed by the reviewed literature (Creswell, 2013) that suggested valuing different views and have no specific hierarchy of credibility.

This resonated with Merriam (2002) who stated that qualitative researchers should notice the multiple constructions and interpretations of reality among participants or effective agents in a research study (p. 4). This also reminded me to consider all aspects of ESOL teachers' social and cultural lives such as their immediate context including power relationships at work. Merriam and Grenier (2019) also noted that in a qualitative approach to research, meaning should be socially constructed by people through describing their interaction with the surrounding environment (p. 3). Therefore, I chose to meet and discuss teachers' professional

practice in their work environments. I also chose to have three interviews with each participant which allowed building bridges of trust with participants and enriched the data after visiting and revisiting teachers' work-life experiences on more than one occasion.

During data collection, I openly interacted with participants in a natural and unobtrusive style by visiting their teaching institutions and talking to them about their actual teaching and learning practices. This naturalistic approach allowed me to interact with teachers and listen to their real experiences rather than bounding by my own presupposed assumptions about ESOL teaching. Creswell (2013) argued that a qualitative research approach is naturalistic research that studies the way people think and act in the course of daily life, and a qualitative researcher is a craftsperson who is guided by philosophical assumptions, but should never be controlled by fixed rules (Creswell, 2013)

In other words, I was interested in revealing the meaning teachers attach to their work context, regardless of what I knew from my previous experience as a PLD specialist. Therefore, I drew on Moustakas' (1994) concepts which suggested that researchers must set aside their own perspectives and views of the world and stick to participants' views, what is called *naïve description* and *epoche* (Moustakas, 1994a) or *bracketing* (Crotty, 1996; Eagleton, 2011; Van Manen, 2014). My experience of practising bracketing will be discussed in more detail in this chapter. My understanding of qualitative research as interpretative and inductive allowed me to bracket my previous knowledge about how teachers learn and develop professionally and construct a fresh view and first-hand experience that is based on various ESOL teachers' views. Being interpretative and inductive was very essential to achieve the rich description of teachers' real experiences, and guided data analysis. Much literature claimed that qualitative research should be inductive, creative and intuitive (S. B. Merriam & Grenier, 2019; D. Mills & Morton, 2013; Taylor et al., 2016). Consequently, in this study, qualitative data is analysed inductively using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) by categorising gathered data into patterns, and finding themes from collected data and not vice versa. I interacted with data during data collection and began to identify emerging themes. This was very important during interviewing teachers and allowed me to build upon their responses while digging deeper into the meaning of their experiences.

Merriam (2019) noted that interpretative qualitative research is about understanding what the world looks like in participants' exact settings (p. 5). Therefore, my understanding is also based on the uniqueness of teachers' learning in the particular context of PTEs. Understanding the

nature of this context is an end in itself, so exploring what might happen in the future or in different contexts, such as Australia or the Middle East, is left for future research studies to examine as I discuss in the limitation section of this chapter.

Social constructivism

Understanding teachers' professional practice is connected to a number of social realities constructed by different agents in the field such as teachers, managers, students and business owners. I noticed that the stakeholders have multiple views of in-service teachers' professional practice. While academic managers might expect ESOL teachers to come to work armed with knowledge about teaching, the gulf between the expected level of professionalism and teachers' actual professional knowledge is deep. Another example of multiple realities is evidenced in business owners viewing PTEs as businesses while teachers worried about professional standards. These different perspectives of teachers' professional practice would affect their professional learning as well as their ability of decision making.

Creswell and others noted that the researcher is supposed to deeply understand the variety of socially constructed realities from the point of views of participants to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Taylor et al., 2016). Therefore, I drew on the philosophical underpinnings of social constructivism theory to inform my theoretical positioning in this research study as it provides a suitable theoretical perspective for this interpretative qualitative research. Social constructivism meets my personal interest and epistemological position about teachers as effective agents who can to a large extent manage their own professional practice and become a part of decision making in PTEs.

However, subjectivity presented a theoretical challenge during the data collection of this study. Sometimes it was inevitable, and needed to be recognised and dealt with. Social constructivists encourage researchers to utilise the meaning of analysed data to inductively identify patterns and construct knowledge about the investigated phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Merriam and Grenier (2019) also noted the disadvantages and biases of involving the researcher's experiences in the field during data collection which included subjectivity (p. 5). Relevant literature also suggested that individuals can formulate various understandings of the world in which they live and work through developing subjective meanings of their own experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2013). Therefore, to reduce the effect of subjectivity, I was engaged in a process of identifying and excluding my preconceived assumptions about ESOL teaching in PTEs, as I had worked in ESOL teaching and management in PTEs before I started

this research study. I also decided to identify these prospective biases and monitor how they might affect data collection while I was forming my intuitive understanding of the targeted phenomenon.

Basically, I drew my initial understanding of social constructivism from Crotty's (1998) philosophical assumptions. He claimed that: a) individuals are interpretative by being engaged with the world, b) understanding the world is connected to one's cultural, historical and social perspectives, and c) the generation of meaning is mainly social, and is the product of interaction with a human community (Crotty, 1998). These three assumptions guided my understanding of teachers' professional practice and allowed me to highlight the particulars of their work life experiences in response to the surrounding work milieu.

A number of theorists (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Schwandt, 1994) described social constructivism as a paradigm of enquiry that adopts the notion of what is real as a construction of the minds of individuals. It can also be defined as a way of viewing the truth that acknowledges and considers the validity of other ways of seeing it (Young & Collin, 2004). Social constructivists in this context value the variety of meanings constructed by participants from which emerge new ideas or theories. Therefore, this research study was guided by social constructivism in identifying research problems, formulating research questions, and ensuring the trustworthiness and rigour of study procedures.

My epistemological stance in this study was formed by interacting with various forms of social constructivism. The history of social constructivism reported by Young and Collin (2004) noted the multiplicity of epistemological positions within the constructivist family of researchers, as they said that "within the overall constructivist family, there are several differing positions" (pp. 375,376). They identified them as three main categories a) radical constructivists such as Von Glaserfeld who suggested that reality is only constructed in individuals' minds, b) more moderate constructivists such as Kelly and Piaget who acknowledged that individual constructs knowledge within a systematic relationship to the external world, c) social constructivists, such as Bruner and Vygotsky who brought the relationship between social influences and relationships and individual's construction of knowledge.

Unexpectedly, this variety of positions enriched my understanding of how teachers construct and reconstruct ideas about their professional practice, and each one assists my understanding of teachers' PLD learning phases. For example, Piaget's (1896-1980) ideas of an individual's

ability to construct and reconstruct meaning individually and independently from the surrounding community explained how teachers sometimes initiate PLD activities individually. However, his ideas have been criticised, particularly in some literature (Knowles, 1980; Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2012) which described adults as independent learners who tend to work individually.

Piaget's ideas about cognitive development helped me understand the nature of ESOL teachers' professional practice when they tend to reflect on their own practices before interacting with the surrounding community. Vygotsky's general works between 1896 and 1934 adopted a position towards the learning process which accepted it as a social process and highlighted the role other factors in the surrounding society play in directing individuals' learning. In a social constructivist manner, my epistemological stance towards teachers' professional practice and learning drew on both Piaget's individual cognition and Vygotsky's social, historical and political lenses towards understanding the phenomenon of ESOL teachers' professional practice in PTEs. Taking this philosophical stance towards teachers' professional practice illuminated my understanding of teachers' immediate context in relation to their individual experiences. Teachers in PTEs seemed to be engaged in activities of exploring and reflecting on the surrounding work environment.

Phenomenology

Epistemologically, phenomenology can be informed by a constructivist philosophy and can be either described as a research method or a philosophical approach (Van Manen, 2014, p. 16). In this study, it is a meaning-giving method for carrying out this case study. My basic understanding of phenomenology was inspired by the ideas of Husserl; the principal founder of phenomenology (Eagleton, 2011, p. 47). My ideas were also guided by the model of his student, Clark Moustakas (1994a). I draw on Husserl's phenomenology which adopted the common-person understanding of the world which argues that objects exist independently from individuals, and believed in the reliability of conscious and immediate experiences (Van Manen, 1990; Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015).

Acknowledging ESOL teachers' immediate experiences at their workplaces required studying their daily-life conscious decisions, understanding their social and cultural contexts, and valuing their various perceptions. Reviewed literature (Lester, 1999; Moustakas, 1994a, 1994b) noted that a phenomenon is better understood in its totality and from a fresh and first-hand perspective, so I chose to hear from ESOL teachers' directly without allowing any type of

interventions from their managers nor myself as a researcher. Phenomenology could also be defined as the science of essences and consciousness: “it is a form of methodological idealism, seeking to explore an abstraction called *human consciousness* and a world of pure possibilities” (Eagleton, 2011, p. 49; Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015). In this sense, I accepted phenomenology as the “building blocks of human science and the basis for knowledge” (Moustakas, 1994a, p. 26) which facilitated my attempts to capture the meaning teachers constructed of their interaction of the immediate work context in PTEs.

Along with other key concepts of phenomenology, bracketing, also known as *epoche* or phenomenological reduction (Gearing, 2004, p. 1430), played an essential role in how I approached phenomenological research (Eagleton, 2011; Gearing, 2004; Van Manen, 2014). I have been engaged in ESOL and ESOL management for more than seventeen years, and this explains my deep interest in exploring ESOL teachers’ experiences and practices in relation to their professional practice. However, achieving a rich description of participants’ real life experiences required a fresh point of view to describe the nature of their everyday life and view what Husserl (2014) called “purified phenomena” (Husserl, 2014, p. 43; Moustakas, 1994a). Husserl (2014) simply refers to bracketing as disconnection, disconnecting, and putting out of action whatever we choose to be conscious of, “even though it pleases us to put it in brackets” (p. 110). My experience of my being engaged in bracketing has been mentioned in both the introduction and methodology chapters. This is because my conceptualisation about bracketing evolved throughout this research study and this evolving nature mirrored the complexity of the targeted phenomenon. In this study, the concept of bracketing resonates with Gearing’s (2004) definition as a rich concept and important aspect of qualitative research which allows the researcher to avoid being affected by preconceived assumptions about the investigated phenomenon (Gearing, 2004, p. 1432). Nevertheless, practising bracketing was associated with tensions which are identified and explained in a separate section in this chapter.

In this research study, I chose to adopt a transcendental phenomenology. However, literature about phenomenology (Gill, 2014; Moustakas, 1994a, 1994b; Van Manen, 2014; Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015) highlighted various approaches to phenomenological research which included transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology. Although hermeneutic phenomenology was sometimes considered a discipline of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, there were serious differences between their philosophical positions (Barua, 2007). On the one hand, hermeneutic phenomenologists relied on interpretations rather than merely descriptions of texts “hermeneutic” in order to achieve a meaningful understanding of

life (Van Manen, 2014). On the other hand, transcendental phenomenologists had meaning as the centre of attention and sought the essences of participants' life experiences. While designing this research study, Moustakas' (1994) transcendental methodology emerged as the broad framework for this interpretative qualitative case study. Transcendental phenomenology provided a systematic model for study design in relation to data collection. Although this study design did not follow Moustakas' transcendental model exact procedures, it relied broadly on its procedures of data collection.

Decision about representing data

This section continues explaining the evolving nature of methodological decisions which I made throughout this research study in relation to the representation of collected data, and how the case study method design was guided by grounded theory and utilised narratives to represent participants' experiences. This study is a case study which can be considered as a composite case study of five, separate but interrelated, cases of ESOL teachers' perceptions of their professional practice in response to work milieu in post-school education institutions in Christchurch. This resonates with Merriam's (2002) argument about case study research as "an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit" (p. 8). I chose to allow teachers' voices to guide the discussions and findings of the study through applying two levels of data analysis. On one level, I was concerned with important stories in participants' narratives, while on the other level I highlighted across cases themes. These two streams of information interwove the case study of five teachers' work life challenges and how they interacted with them.

In particular, this research project is a case study of teachers' professional practice embedded in five different cases of in-service ESOL teachers' experiences in a capsule of time of nine months bounded by private training establishments in Christchurch. This study design was meant to optimise my understanding of the case rather than to generalise beyond it. These five teachers, as illustrated in the introduction and literature review chapters, operated professionally within particular work conditions which affect teachers' decisions about their own professional practices.

Decisions about approaching and understanding participants

Since it was first introduced by Glaser and Strauss in their book *Awareness of Dying* (1965), the evolution of grounded theory was rapid, and qualitative researchers have opened up substantive areas by providing various conceptual perspectives of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005; B. G. Glaser, 1995). In this research study, I adopted the original form of the grounded theory approach that was developed by Glaser and Strauss themselves, and I used it as a means of approaching and understanding participants. Since the targeted phenomenon is existing among a group of relatively isolated practitioners, and there is not much literature about the professional practice of this group of teachers, I decided to talk to teachers directly and hear their stories from their own perspectives.

In this research study, grounded theory guided procedures of exploring ESOL teachers' professional practice and its interrelated work-life factors such as context, culture, politics and teachers' agency. Participants' ideas, feelings and experiences were identified as my source of first-hand information; my understanding of the phenomenon was based on participants' perspectives rather than imposing a specific theory on them. This resonates with Glaser and Strauss' (1968) description of the grounded theory which recommends stepping aside from preconceived theoretical frameworks and theories (Barney G Glaser & Strauss, 1968, p. 45). I entered this study with no specific pre-determined theory of how teachers learn, and allowed collected data to guide and inform research as well as interview questions.

As suggested by, Glaser and Strauss (1968) I applied theoretical sampling which allowed me to decide on "what data to collect next and where to find them, the initial decisions are not based on a preconceived theoretical framework" (p. 45). In other words, I trusted teachers' contributions and valued their voices during data collection, and allowed their responses to guide the study procedures. For example, the second interview questions were decided on after reviewing and studying the first interview responses for the same participant teacher. This resonates with Corbin (2017) who asserted that teachers can take an active role in responding to teaching challenges and contribute to the process of data collection.

Furthermore, this study utilises a combination of concepts of phenomenology, case study and use of narratives as means of representing participants' data. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that qualitative research probably neither belongs to one single discipline, nor has a specific set of methods (as cited in (S. B. Merriam, 2002, p. 6)). Although various types of qualitative research have different focuses, they still share some attributes in common that make them all

go under the umbrella of qualitative research. Therefore, other types of studies such as phenomenology can be combined with case study research (S. B. Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) also thinks that it is reasonable to consider all qualitative research as phenomenological (S. B. Merriam, 2002, p. 7). Phenomenology adopts the common-person understanding of the world claiming that objects exist independently of ourselves, and affirms the reliability of conscious and immediate experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Therefore, I combined concepts of case study and transcendental phenomenology: that phenomenology (Van Manen, 2014, p. 16), acts as a meaning-giving method and broadly guided the design of this case study.

To sum up, this is an interpretative qualitative case study guided by the philosophical assumptions of social constructivism, and was broadly informed by transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994a) which informed the procedures of collecting data. My decisions in relation to study design were influenced by interrelated theories such as case study, grounded theory, and activity theory. My decision to use this range of qualitative research theories and methods came as a reaction to the multidimensional nature, and complexity of teachers' practices connected to their learning and development in their particular work context of private teaching institutions, and confirmed my choice of the interpretative qualitative approach to the understanding of this phenomenon.

Research Process

Research site

Christchurch is the largest city on the South Island of New Zealand, and due to its attractions and entertainment options it has recently become one of the exciting destinations for international students. Although the mosque shooting event has affected all sides of life in the city, Christchurch still has more than seventy post-school education organisations (NZQA, 2019). The community of teachers in private training establishments (PTEs) in Christchurch is multicultural and encompasses a huge variety of establishments. Private training establishments vary in terms of their educational philosophy, culture, size, location and range of educational expertise.

PTEs also vary from small businesses that are owned and run by a few people to large institutions incorporated with international education providers which have a large number of teachers and hundreds of students. Teachers' qualifications also vary from university students to Ph.D. holders, and their ESOL teaching experience varies from novice to experienced teachers and PLD specialists. The number of in-service ESOL teachers in PTEs varies

according to the time of the year and number of students, and sometimes it was reduced to a very small number such as the time after the earthquake and the time after the mosque shooting, and this is due to the decreased number of international students. My decision to choose PTEs as a research site was provoked by my interest in ESOL teachers' PLD, and was informed by my experience in leading teachers' professional practice in PTEs in Egypt, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and New Zealand. I have been engaged in ESOL teaching and PTEs management for the past fifteen years.

The selection of specific PTEs as research sites was affected by the geographical boundaries, gatekeepers' acceptance, and participants' approval. I approached more than seven PTEs, and ended up gaining and maintaining access to three institutions and five teachers. Gaining and maintaining access was a tricky activity, and I dedicate chapter Four to discuss my experience of this process. To gain access to one of the PTEs, I was asked to teach English there so I could maintain a professional relationship with gatekeepers and participants. Actually, this enhanced my chances of staying in contact with participant teachers and collecting richer data.

The three participant PTEs were all private post-school education providers. They had a number of migrant and international fee-paying students. The students' purpose of study varied within the same institution; some students study English to join a university, others need English for work, and some are only attending an ESOL class to get the visa and stay in New Zealand. These PTEs were owned by individuals and operated by a mixture of ESOL qualified and non-ESOL qualified managers.

Participants

The pool of participants in this research study included five ESOL teachers in PTEs in Christchurch. Participant teachers' qualifications and teaching experience varied, and they were selected as they were in-service teachers who showed interest to participate in my study. First of all, I sought the institutions' principals, the gatekeepers, approval to conduct my study in their institutions before recruiting participants. After meetings with gatekeepers to explain my research study aims and procedures, I had the approval of three gatekeepers who signed information and consent sheets.

Deep engagement with teachers was required to gather sufficient information about their professional practice, so I approached those teachers who were nominated by gatekeepers as developing teachers; those who show signs of being reflective on their professional practices. In addition, I tried to choose those who had the potential to provide insights into the description

of teachers' work life experiences and professional practices. I also relied on my informal discussions with teachers to confirm my choices.

From the three identified institutions, I approached thirteen teachers and invited them to participate, but ended up including five ESOL teachers as the total number of participants cited in this research study. When I first approached teachers, almost all teachers showed genuine interest in the topic and some of them started talking about their professional practice challenges in our first meeting. However, one teacher said that he was not willing to participate in the study, as he was not sure whether he could commit to attending three interviews. Another two were excluded by a conscious decision on my side. They confirmed that they worked in management rather than teaching, and the focus of this study is on teachers' perspectives.

This left me with ten participants who agreed to come to the first interview and signed both consent and information sheet. After the first interview, three participants stopped answering my emails or text messages, and they could not attend the second or the third interview. These three participants cited workload as the reason for not attending the interviews and participating fully in this research study. I came to know that the whole institution, in which these three participants worked, was under the pressure of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) investigations which gave teachers and management a tremendous work load, so these three participants asked to withdraw from the study. They also asked to delete their first interview records from my data, and I responded with affirmation according to the University of Canterbury research ethics (see appendix A). In addition, after I had reviewed the data collected from their first interviews, I came to the conclusion that none of them discussed something which was not mentioned in the rest of the other participants' responses.

In addition to this, another two participants were excluded as they did not contribute to the description of the phenomenon, as their engagement in ESOL and with the targeted phenomenon was only temporary and limited. Teaching ESOL was just a side activity to earn their living. Their responses tended to echo the other participants' perceptions. Therefore, the number of participant teachers was five teachers whose stories were used to create narratives and were used to inform the findings of this case study. Moustakas (1994) noted that the essential criteria for participants' selection might not rely on the number of participants, but it relies more on whether "the research participant has experienced the phenomenon, is intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings" (Moustakas, 1994a). Therefore, in my case study, the actual number of participants was relatively unimportant, the most important

factor was their potentiality to enrich my understanding of actual teachers' professional practices. Therefore, I had three interviews with each participant to enhance my chance of gaining a deep understanding of their real experiences rather than conducting one interview with a larger number of participants.

After reviewing relevant literature (Moustakas, 1994a; Taylor et al., 2016), I started to understand that the bigger number of interviews I may have with every participant, the smaller number of participants would be needed to collect rich data. Since flexible research design was one of the key characteristics of this qualitative interviewing, I was not worried about the number of participants. I was concerned about the extent to which each participant might contribute to my understanding of the phenomenon. Taylor and others (2016) also highlighted the value of theoretical sampling which focuses on the potentiality of "each case to aid the researcher in developing theoretical insights into the area of social life being studied"(p. 124). This guided my choice of participants who were suitable to the research aims and showed signs of being reflective about their professional practices. After uncovering perspectives held by participants, a researcher "would have an idea that you had reached this saturation point when additional interviews or interviews with additional yield has no genuine new insights" (Taylor et al., 2016, p. 125). Therefore, after a few informal discussions with potential participants, I decided to select those five ESOL teachers to be the participants of this research study.

Consent and information sheets (see appendices A, B, C and D), approved by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC) at the University of Canterbury, were presented to participants and signed by them to confirm their agreement to participate in this research study. Teachers volunteered to participate, and were informed about their right to withdraw at any time with no negative consequences or repercussions placed upon them or their PTEs. The information and consent forms also included information about the number of interviews and the estimated time for every interview, so participants were aware of how much time they needed to dedicate to the study. Participants were also asked to bring an artefact of their PLD activities and classroom practices to the second interview. Table 3.2 provides information about participants' details, and illustrates the change in the number of participant teachers to become the final five participants.

Table 3.2: Participants' qualification, teaching experience, and participation period.

Pseudonym		ESOL Experience	Experience in Christchurch	ESOL qualification	Participation period
1	Mary	11 years	2 years	BA, CELTA	9 months
2	Sensei	20 years	10 years	CELTA, Postgraduate Diploma	8 months
3	Paula Silva	13 years	2 years	In-service Certificate of English Language Teaching (ICELT)	3 months
4	Emily	NA	3 years	PhD Candidate education	4 months
5	Ruth	NA	3 years	No ESOL qualification	3 months
6	Mary2	Excluded			
7	Mir	Excluded			
8	Hannah	Excluded			
9	Cam	attended one interview / withdrew			
10	Kem	attended one interview / withdrew			
11	Masa	attended one interview / withdrew			
12	Sa	Excluded			

Data collection

The procedures of collecting and organising data in this research study were informed by Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenology. I drew on Moustakas' (1994) data collection procedures as he presented a systematic approach to data collection (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). The provision of systematic procedures freed my thinking to focus on the aim of focusing on the wholeness of ESOL teachers' real experiences. In addition to that, I viewed the interrelated influences which the individual teachers' experiences have brought to the practice of ESOL teaching, and to the phenomenon of teachers' taking charge of their professional practice as a whole. According to Moustakas (1994), the core process of information derivation in a phenomenological research study encompasses essential steps. One of the key steps is bracketing (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Although there are a few underlying philosophical differences between bracketing, epoche and phenomenological reduction, Gearing (2004) used them interchangeably and accepted them as synonyms (Gearing, 2004, p. 1430). In my experience, I chose to adopt Gearing's understanding of bracketing as a multi-layered process, and researchers should acknowledge the accompanying tensions. In my case achieving complete bracketing was problematic, but acknowledging these problems allowed me to deal with them.

Bracketing

Tufford and Newman (2012) claimed that it is challenging for researchers to explore topics which they may have wide experience in, and they also argued that "a lengthy research endeavour on an emotionally challenging topic can infuse the researcher with its inherent challenges, render continuing research an arduous endeavour and, in turn, skew the results and interpretations." (p. 81). In my case, I have been engaged in ESOL teaching and ESOL management for the past 19 years. I have also been managing and leading ESOL in-service teachers' learning and development for the past ten years. Getting engaged in bracketing and reduction at an early stage in my research, prior to starting data collection, was very beneficial in many ways. However, bracketing brought a number of tensions. I chose to adopt a flexible attitude towards my understanding of being engaged in bracketing. I was also guided by relevant literature (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994a; Sheehan, 2014; Tufford & Newman, 2012) and I managed to identify the tensions and deal with them accordingly. These tensions included the best time bracketing might happen, how it should be conducted, piloting my

interview questions, and my role as a researcher and participants' role in the process of bracketing.

Before data collection, I started a process of mind clearing. Guided by relevant literature (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Moustakas, 1994a) I decided to set aside my previous views of the phenomenon and pay full attention to the participants' reported experiences. To do this, I adopted a flexible position towards in-service ESOL teacher professional practice in PTEs, and started recalling all my past experiences as a teacher trainer and the head of a professional learning and development unit in some PTES as well as government universities in the Middle East throughout the past 10 years. Then, I started reflecting on these experiences and set aside any presuppositions that may have any connection to the phenomenon of teacher professional practice in PTEs. This process allowed the preconceptions of judging, correcting and leading teachers' practices to enter and leave my mind swiftly. Then, I repeated this process until I reached a sense of satisfaction towards listening to teachers and allowing their views to occupy the centre of my attention without attempting to change them to match my preconceived understanding of the nature of what teachers' practices should be like according to my past experience.

After being engaged in the bracketing practices, I started writing a learning journal which described my learning about teacher learning itself. I have noticed that I started talking about two characters; one character that was a teacher trainer and a PLD specialist, and the other character was that researcher who is naively listening to participants' experiences. At this stage, I was comfortably shifting between these two identities and watch them interacting. This was the time when I reached a conclusion of practising bracketing smoothly.

Furthermore, conducting my research study in New Zealand was a conscious decision towards viewing the phenomenon with "new eyes in a naïve and completely open manner" (Moustakas, 1994a, p. 86). Most of my past ESOL teaching experience was in the Middle East, and the context in New Zealand presented a fresh perspective of ESOL teachers' perception of their practices in private establishments. Fortunately, when I started teaching in New Zealand, I was accidentally introduced to ESOL teachers in Christchurch as a merely new ESOL teacher who was conducting a Ph.D. research. This allowed them to accept me as an insider "another ESOL teacher" and they felt free to share ideas and practices without the pressure of being judged by a PLD specialist or a teacher trainer. Although gaining and maintaining access to participants

was complicated and challenging, their acceptance of me as an ESOL teacher had a significant role in facilitating my engagement in bracketing.

In addition to clearing my mind and maximising participants' roles, I decided to pilot the questions of my interview to support and deepen my engagement in bracketing and reduction. The following section explains piloting my research tool, the interview questions prior to conducting actual interviews with participants.

Piloting interview questions

Before conducting interviews with participants, a pilot study was conducted on three volunteer ESOL teachers who were not among the pool of the five participant teachers. In Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology, during preparing to collect data, the researchers' research tools should be guided and might be refined by piloting procedures (D. Mills & Morton, 2013; Moustakas, 1994a; Taylor et al., 2016). In addition, Merriam and Grenier (2019) highlighted the importance of modifying and enhancing interview questions to serve the purpose and objectives of a qualitative research study by ensuring that researchers ask the right questions (S. B. Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Piloting the interview questions also helped me gain confidence in conducting an interview and talking about ESOL teaching in general comfortably.

Although I chose to adopt a naïve position and did make an effort to bracket all my previous experiences about teachers' learning and development, I realised that some interview questions were directed by my previous presuppositions and preconceived ideas. Some of my old perceptions of ESOL teaching were evident in some of the interview questions. I was not able to recognise them until I heard teachers' responses which seemed to be directed into specific areas of teachers' practice such as their professional learning and development.

Thus, I changed the prompts and conducted two more test-interviews with ESOL teachers in Christchurch. I wanted to get a feel of how the interview would go in a social context. The purposes of piloting the interview questions included testing the quality of asked questions, their impact on the participants and whether participants' responses provided participants' insights without being directed by my preconceived understanding. In addition to that, it was a chance to monitor my behaviour during the interview and confirm that I managed to set aside all my previous experiences of mentoring and guiding and directing teachers' PLD practices.

Piloting the research tool changed the way I constructed the interviews' questions in many ways. For example, I noticed that I had the tendency of using long leading statements that sometimes distracted the participant's focus from the question itself, and this resulted in the participant providing a different type of data. I also changed the order of some questions and deleted some technical terms such as "pedagogical" for the convenience of participants' understanding. Listening to the recordings of the piloted interviews, I was able to capture the moments when I interfered with participants' flow of ideas to feed in my personal impression or directing them to say what I expected them to share. Reflecting on these moments, I realised that participants provided richer information when they were allowed to freely talk about their experiences. Reaching this conclusion guided my last piloting interviews, and I felt more comfortable allowing participants to lead the discussion and share more authentic moments about their experiences of being engaged in PLD activities.

The preliminary outcome of this research tool piloting practice resulted in an accepted presentation in the TERNZ (Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand) Conference, 2017 in Massey University. My presentation tackled teachers' attitudes towards their professional development activities. Attending this conference allowed me to get engaged with different ideas and views of ESOL teachers' practices. This conference provided further practice of identifying presuppositions and allowing them to leave my mind in order to seek fresh knowledge based only on participants' real work life stories.

Finding participants

During the time I was waiting for the University of Canterbury ethical committee to issue their ethical approval for this research study, I started building bridges with private ESOL institutions by visiting them, talking to managers about my research study, and sometimes applying for teaching positions in these institutions. Gaining and maintaining access to research sites was far more complicated than I thought, and I had to change my strategies and techniques to suit the challenges I faced during this phase of my research study. Therefore, I decided to dedicate chapter Four to describe in detail these challenges as well as introduce the conditions of work in PTEs as a work context for participants. In addition, I had an accepted paper in NZARE, 2019 (New Zealand Association for Research in Education) in the University of Canterbury to share my work and experiences about gaining and maintaining access to the research field. My participation in the conference showed the interest of researchers in unpacking the complexity of the process of gaining and maintain access to research sites.

As soon as I gained the ERHEC approval, I formally approached institutions' managers and academic managers. Then, I started by sending emails to those gatekeepers whom I did not get a chance to meet in person to book appointments with them. I emailed four institutions, but I got a response from one institution only. Then, I contacted the institutions in which I knew the managers from the previous time of building bridges. Out of five approached PTEs, I was able to get the approval of three institutions' managers to recruit teachers from their institutions. Gatekeepers in these three institutions were provided with a consent sheet (see appendix D) and an information sheet (see appendix C) to read and sign. The information sheet gave a description of the research study objectives, researcher role, institution role, and offered full assurance of the institution and teachers' safety and confidentiality. Also, it explained voluntary participation of the institution, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. After gaining the gatekeepers' approval, I asked them to nominate teachers whom they thought were engaged in reflective activities and might contribute insights to this research study. Teachers were also provided with a similar consent sheet (see appendix B) and an information sheet (see appendix A) which described the number of interviews and the expected time of every interview and the timeframe of the whole study in addition to the teacher's role and their right to withdraw at any time without any negative ramifications. Teachers were also assured that institution managers would not be told about their decisions to participate or withdraw from the study at any stage.

Semi-structured interviews

The next step of data collection included scheduling three interviews for every participant. Merriam and Grenier (2019) noted that in qualitative research the researcher is the "primary instrument for data collection and data analysis" (p. 5). Each participant teacher in this research project was asked to attend three interviews over a period which varied from three to nine months. I made a decision to interview every participant three times to collect rich data about their work life experiences. In addition, it took participants more than one interview to trust me and reveal various aspects of their professional practice challenges. I also chose to be responsive and adaptive in data collection, as I allowed participants' responses in one interview to guide my decisions about planning for the following ones. For example, collected data in the first interview informed my questions of the second and third interviews. This flexibility towards data collection resulted in unanticipated responses that enriched data and deepened my understanding of the targeted phenomenon during data collection.

Since teachers were overwhelmed by other tasks, I decided to schedule interviews one by one and consider teachers' availability. I sent every teacher an invitation to attend the interview and suggested a timeframe and allowed them to decide on the date, time and place of the interview. Taylor and others (2016) highlighted the fact that participants give rich data and gain little by attending interviews, so researchers should keep them motivated and make sure that they are comfortable during interviews (Taylor et al., 2016, p. 145). Participants do not like to be treated as mere sources of information. Thus, as a researcher, one must have a good level of emotional and social intelligence to be able to create a rapport with participants. This rapport would increase the comfortableness of the interviewed and increase the amount of shared data. Therefore, it was important for me to follow these invitation emails with reminder text messages and another reminder prior to the interview date. All the interviews were recorded after gaining the permission of the participants.

Participants were also asked to provide follow up emails. In these emails, participants answered a few questions (see appendix F) about their professional practice and the challenges they faced while teaching ESOL in PTEs. Some teachers needed more than one reminder to reply to the follow up emails. All participants were also asked to provide an artefact from their classroom. These artefacts were all a result of teachers' reflections on their professional practice and were discussed with teachers in the second interview. Teachers' artefacts described actual practices of teachers inside their classroom and showed the connection between their actual teaching practices and work environment in PTEs.

The three interviews varied between semi-structured and free-flow interviews. The first interview with all participants was semi-structured while the second and third ones tended to be more free-flow interviews. The questions in the second and third interviews were mainly driven by the participants' responses to the previous interview(s). Data collection in this research study was driven by participants' responses rather than being theory directed, as suggested by Saldana (2015) that data driven studies should be mainly about what emerges from the data collected. In addition, quotes from participants' previous interview(s) were used as introductory statements for the following interview questions. After obtaining the participants' permission, the three interviews were all conducted one-to-one and audio recorded. After that, all the interviews were transcribed by the researcher.

Table 3.3: Timeframe and duration of semi-structured interviews for the five participants

	Pseudonyms	First Interview	Second interview	Third Interview
1	Mary	01/05/2018 22:15 minutes	18/10/2108 31:19 minutes	07/02/2019 68:09 minutes
2	Sensei	08/05/2018 26:15 minutes	05/11/2018 18:25 minutes	18/01/2019 43:05
3	Paula Silva	13/11/2018 32:41 minutes	18/12/2018 33:54 minutes	28/01/2019 54:00 minutes
4	Emily	14/11/2018 21:03 minutes	14/12/2018 33:35 minutes	25/02/2019 59:50 minutes (2)
5	Ruth	30/11/2018 30:39 minutes	20/12/2019 35:36 minutes	31/01/2019 59:51 minutes

Transcribing and narrative writing

After conducting the first interview, guided by literature (Austin et al., 2009; D. Mills & Morton, 2013; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984), I listened to the audio records again and again before transcribing them. Since I had three interviews with every participant, listening to the previous interview(s) was helpful in many ways. First of all, I was able to monitor the progress in my ability, as a novice qualitative researcher to run a semi-structured interview. Second, I was able to reflect on the unasked questions and the participants' silence and non-verbal messages. Third, participants' responses to my questions in one interview guided the preparation of my questions for the following interview with the same participant or other participants.

I listened more than once and used an online speech-to-text software called SpeechTexter 2019 to transcribe the interviews. Transcribing interviews took place simultaneously with interviewing. SpeechTexter is a simple transcribing tool, as it works by using headphones to listen to audio texts and dictate them to the website microphone which has speech recognition

technology. I used my voice to dictate interviews' audio to create my first draft of transcripts. Then, I listened again to correct mistakes and make sure that transcripts included non-verbal messages such as pauses, silence, and other reactions. It took me a few trials to become a faster transcriber of interviews using this software. After that, I checked all the transcripts by listening to the audio, reading transcripts and make necessary changes. Then as a final transcribing step, I compiled the transcripts of every participant's interviews together. Three interviews were compiled together for every participant and formed a data-base for their stories. The process of listening several times to the interviews helped me create correct transcripts as well as engage with the data at an early stage.

Then, I read transcripts of the three interviews, and listened to their audio files again and again to highlight hot spots in order to use them in writing a narrative about every participant. At this stage, I started selecting, focusing and categorising chunks of data which supported the identified work life experience of every participant's story. I also used colour coding to follow the story in different interviews and keep a record of how participants presented the same story in different occasions. This resulted in a group of stories for every participant which described their interaction with work conditions in their workplace.

Then, I started reading these stories again and again to allow ideas for writing narratives to emerge. The narratives were written in the form of a description of participants' stories. After that these stories were supported by chunks from the participant's actual quotes. After writing the narratives, I sent them to participants to get their approval on the way I represented their stories. Almost all participants agreed that their narratives are representing their perceptions of private ESOL teaching professional practice. Four of the five participants replied to my emails, and expressed their satisfaction with their stories and complete narrative. The fifth participant has not replied to my email.

Data analysis

This section reports on and provides details about the process of analysing the collected data. As stated earlier, since there is not much literature about ESOL teachers' professional practice in PTEs, I decided to talk directly to teachers rather than imposing a specific theory on them. The understanding of grounded theory, the discovery of theory from data, presented by Glaser and Strauss (1968; 2017) call for reporting participants' grounded, and experiential understanding of their lived experiences. In this research study, I allowed collected data to

guide my understanding of teachers' perception of their work life experiences. Thus, it provided me with a process for approaching phenomenology.

Creswell (2013) argued that data analysis can be continuous in a comparative nature throughout the whole study (Creswell, 2013). During data collection, and specifically when I began transcribing, I started searching for the hot spots which showed participants key moments and major practices of engaging with professional practices in PTEs. Thus, I was also able to identify areas which may potentially provide rich descriptive accounts of the targeted phenomenon. In addition, I categorised data which prompted further questions for the following interview(s). Not only interview questions, but also critical questions related to my overarching research question evolved during data collection. This concurs with what was discussed in the literature (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014) that suggests that data analysis can start early during data collection. Then I wrote summaries of participants' interviews which included anecdotes and information about the participants' experiences of key aspects of their professional practice in PTEs. These chunks of categorised data, and summaries allowed me to get engaged in writing and create the five narratives.

Narratives were first written as color-coded summaries of every participant's set of transcripts. In the beginning, I compiled the transcripts of the three interviews for every participant as one set. Then, I used the interview transcripts to create short summaries. These summaries were colour coded and data was categorised accordingly. The categorised data and stories were woven into key sections of the participant's narrative. Then, these woven stories were compiled together to form a narrative draft. After writing a few drafts of the same narrative, a final draft of the same narrative was exemplified with extracts from the participant's interview. This process was repeated as many times as it took me to create a narrative from every participant's set of data.

This process was always evolving and reflective, as I was always guided by participants' responses. While I was interviewing and transcribing, I noticed that I started identifying some key themes which were evident in participants' stories. Relevant literature (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 226, Taylor and Ussher, 2001) as cited in (Braun & Clarke, 2006) suggested that collecting data and emerging themes can exist simultaneously, and confirmed that it was not unusual to get themes emerging from the collected data during interviews. They also argued that this did not undermine the researcher's role in identifying patterns and themes, selecting and reporting them (p. 80).

Narratives, representations of every participant's stories along with their responses to the interviews questions, were the main unit of data analysis. First of all, narratives were viewed vertically to understand the experience of every participant as an individual. This view allowed me to identify particulars of every individual participant's work life experience. After that, the five narratives were viewed as one unit to identify across cases themes and highlight the repeated patterns among all participants. Although the main focus of data analysis was to capture real work life experiences of teachers in PTEs, the social context of private ESOL teaching which mediated and was mediated by teachers' professional practice was inevitable. ESOL private teaching context has particular characteristics such as power-relationships, business requirements, identity negotiation and teachers' sense of agency. These aspects were evident in participants' stories and were highlighted as contextual influences which directed ESOL teachers' professional practice in PTEs. Therefore, it was essential to review narratives and highlight the emerged themes. Taylor et al. (1984) suggested that researchers should code and analyse data in order to develop themes and concepts. Then, they should categorise these themes and concepts, uncover their properties, explore relationships among themes, and create clusters. Following Taylor et al's ideas, I applied a process of inductive reasoning, thinking and reanalysis to allow themes to emerge from narratives.

It is noteworthy that, at an early stage of data analysis, I drew on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis steps. These steps helped me to code certain data, identify hot spots and categorise data. Thematic analysis also allowed me to deal with data on two levels. As illustrated in reviewed literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Sharan B Merriam, 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014) the first level described what exactly the data was telling me and drew on the surface meaning while the second level was concerned with what was between the lines in an interpretative manner which allowed me to identify the recurring patterns that cut across the data.

As soon as I identified themes, I chose to turn to interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) argued that IPA allows researchers relatively to "stand in the shoes of their subjects" through an interpretative and dynamic process of data analysis (p. 8). Finally, after identifying key emerging themes, seeking relationships between themes and trying to cluster them, I wrote analytic comments on every theme. IPA allowed me to decode the meaning participants made of their own world and understand the meaning of their real-life experiences from teachers' perspectives. Writing analytical comments was not merely providing a description of the data, but going beyond the surface description and relating my

argument to the research question. This stage of data analysis required a complicated process of moving back and forth across the data set of every participant as well as navigating across all participants' sets of data, discussing with peers and supervisors, and putting up ideas for public discussion in conferences when possible.

IPA analytic stages, in this study, drew on aspects from Pietkiewicz and Smith's (2014) IPA analysis presented as an example in a study conducted on a group of Tibetans and how they made meaning of their medical conditions. This example included stages such as multiple reading and making notes, transforming notes into emerging themes, seeking relationships and clustering themes, and writing analytical comments from the researcher. Thus, I chose to analyse, interpret, and explain data rather than just paraphrasing and describing it. Consequently, I produced an analytic narrative which included my interpretations as well as the participant's voice to represent participants' perspectives of ESOL teachers' professional practice in PTEs.

Ethical considerations

In this research study, I wanted to hear ESOL teachers' views of work conditions in PTEs, and carry their voices to the world. I also wanted to represent them in a way that mirrored their culture, respected their values and valued their identities, so I listened to their ideas and what they actually felt. Teachers in PTEs are a part of a commercial environment which has different levels of power, and revealing and sharing their opinions might have an impact on their relationships with their managers or business owners. Therefore, I chose to ask participants to assign pseudonyms to ensure technical anonymity and increase participants' sense of comfortability in sharing their experiences.

This research proposal was granted ethical approval from the ERHEC, and ethical principles of human science research have been followed in the process of approval. The ERHEC has also approved information, and consent sheets presented to gatekeepers and participants. Some gatekeepers and participants asked to take both forms to read them and have enough time to think about their participation, and others signed the forms in the first meeting. The information and consent forms included detailed information about study aims, procedures, teachers' role, organisations' role, study duration, contact information, and participant right to withdraw at any stage of the study. According to Moustakas (1994a), participants should be informed that their privacy was respected, they could withdraw from the study at any time, and data would be open to validation by them.

The ERHEC ethical code and policy defined this research study as a low-risk study, as the participants are adult teachers. After and during data collection, I was responsible for storing data in a safe and password protected place, and allowed only authorised persons to have access to it. Data security was discussed in some literature (Moustakas, 1994a; Taylor et al., 2016) which noted that the researcher should be responsible for the security of the collected data, and should take the necessary procedures to protect it.

I planned to start my field work by establishing contact with gatekeepers through presenting consent and information sheets to gatekeepers. The information sheet included a clear and honest description of my research aims, and procedures. Moustakas (1994a) argued that it is necessary for researchers to maintain ethical standards by establishing clear agreements with participants/co-researchers (p. 109). In addition, this research adopted a straightforward approach in contacting gatekeepers and participants. As argued by Taylor et al. (2016), the straightforward approach is the best way to approach gatekeepers and participants to gain their trust, and be accepted as a non-judgmental and a non-threatening person. I was introduced to the teachers as an ESOL teacher, a colleague, before talking to them about my research; this increased the comfortability among participants and helped me gain their trust.

This research study includes transcribing three interviews for every participant. Some of these interviews were more than an hour long. I was planning to recruit a professional transcriber who would sign a transcriber confidentiality agreement, but I made a decision to transcribe all the interviews. Although I had the transcriber consent sheet approved by ERHEC of the university (see appendix E), I have never recruited a transcriber.

Another ethical issue is related to the power given to the researcher in relation to representing participants' ideas. In other words, as a researcher, I normally use technical language in my report that would be difficult for participants. If participants decide to read the findings of the study, I need to provide a simple form of my final report as suggested by Berg (2007). However, participants of this study were ESOL teachers and were expected to be aware of the used technical terms.

The poll of participants included five ESOL teachers. This was a small population of participants who were all in the same business. Some of the participants worked for the three institutions from which I recruited participants for this study. Thus, there was a possibility that one participant might identify another participant. Therefore, I decided to keep the participation confidential, and each participant was asked to approve their comfortability with the narrative

that represents their data and ideas. A few participants asked to delete a few details to ensure their anonymity, and their request was honoured and followed by a confirmation from participants who have received a copy of their narrative.

Power relationships at workplace are another key ethical issue. Although ESOL teachers are adults, academic supervisors and managers might have power over teachers. Teachers' participation and provided data could be affected by the power of managers as gatekeepers. Therefore, participation and withdrawal decisions were kept confidential. Gatekeepers were not informed about teachers' participation or withdrawal, even when they nominated teachers, I did not tell them whether nominated teachers accepted to participate or declined my invitation.

Summary

This chapter has provided an account of my epistemological and methodological choices, and indicated the flexible nature of this research study design. It has also highlighted the particular context and participants of the study, and my decision to use semi-structured interviews to collect data which was used to write a narrative of every participant's story of work life experiences.

To gain a rich description of teachers' experiences, I needed to build bridges of trust with institutions' principals as gatekeepers and ESOL teachers as participants. The process of gaining and maintaining access to the researched and research sites was associated with some tensions which shaped some of my methodological decisions. Therefore, I decided to fully consider the process of gaining and maintain access to the field before turning to the narratives of the participants. Thus, the following chapter describes my personal experience of gaining and maintaining access to the field and research sites.

Chapter Four: Gaining and Maintaining Access to Research Sites

“The ways in which one enters and remains in a field setting reflect the research setting as much as they do the research itself” (Bondy, 2013)

Introduction

In this chapter, I decided to provide a detailed description of my experience of gaining and maintaining access to research sites for various reasons. First of all, gaining access activity in this study was associated with tensions and positioning shifts which were particular to private training establishments (PTEs) as a work context. Secondly, the description of my experience was meant to introduce the reader to the context of this research study. Thirdly, reviewed literature (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003; Fjellström & Guttormsen, 2016; Rana, 2019) noted that little research has focused on gaining and maintaining access from a sociocultural perspective. Although the description of gaining and maintaining access process has been mentioned in many studies, it has usually appeared in the form of a short section or scattered mentions in the reviewed thesis and articles. Thus, this explains my decision to dedicate a chapter for this important part of my research endeavour. It also presents the epistemological shifts in my naïve positioning towards understanding the process of gaining and maintaining access through considering the surrounding social influences. Thus, this chapter describes my personal gaining-access experiences for almost one year as an emerging qualitative researcher who, as a foreigner, aimed to gain access to private training establishments in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Gaining access in a qualitative research study

Like many other qualitative researchers, the stage of planning to enter and entering the field in this research study constituted a crucial activity. Grant (2017) noted that in qualitative research, researchers often face the challenge of obtaining relevant, meaningful, and rich data. My data collection stage included an enormously crucial activity which was gaining and maintaining access to research sites. This activity brought unexpected surprises which would not only affect the success or failure of any research endeavour (Fjellström & Guttormsen, 2016), but might have an impact on the obtained data, as well. Other studies (de la Cuesta Benjumea, 2014; Feldman et al., 2003; Grant, 2017; Shenton & Hayter, 2004) present gaining and maintaining access to the field as a key activity in any qualitative research studies.

In this research project, gaining access required planning and sometimes was associated with changes in the decisions I made about the design of this research study. These changes were

usually driven by the surrounding environment and the pool of participant teachers' work circumstances. The sociocultural fabric of teachers in PTEs constitutes teachers from different countries (Walker, 2014). In my experience, this pool of teachers may include, but is not limited to, international students who seek a part-time job, other subjects' teachers who are native English speakers and willing to teach English, and also a number of qualified ESOL teachers. This variety represents a wide range of teaching qualifications and nationalities that creates tensions, and posed a challenge for novice researchers like me while attempting to gain access to them in a multi-sociocultural environment. Emphasising the relationship between participants' sociocultural background and gaining access to their communities is not unique to this study, as Rana (2019) conducted a research study in the rural Himalayas in Nepal, and he highlighted not only sociocultural and language diversities, but topography and travel complications as challenges of gaining access to research sites.

The paradox of access to research sites

Feldman, Bell and Berger (2003) suggested that the paradox of gaining access is due to the gap between the perceptions of the researchers and the researched. While researchers have little to offer to participants, researchers expect them to give significant contributions. In other words, researchers normally ask participants to dedicate time for interviews, share personal experiences, and reveal facts which in some cases might expose participants, if they are identified. In return, participants get very little by participating in a research study such as having their voices heard or revealing unexamined areas in their professional practice which could be done in alternative and safer methods. Therefore, Feldman and others (2003) suggested that researchers, to illuminate this paradox, should view access from different lenses which illuminate the social circumstances of participants (p. vii). In this research study, as an emerging researcher, I started with a specific understanding of the nature of gaining access to research sites which was changed to viewing it as a social, and relational activity. In the beginning, I was a stranger to the New Zealand tertiary education sector and thought that gaining access to research sites means achieving access to participants. However, and after a number of attempts, I realised that this naïve understanding of gaining access was not helpful. Such an activity required shifting from being just an outsider to being an insider to the targeted research sites.

Another aspect that added to the evolving nature of my understanding of accessing sites was how I perceived private ESOL teaching establishments, the particular research sites, which also changed my initial views of gaining access. At an early stage of this research study, I thought

that gaining access to sites is merely asking questions, and obtaining answers. I thought that the data for my research study existed inside PTEs as just buildings, so I believed that I simply need to find the addresses of PTEs, meet teachers, talk to them, and collect data and leave! I was not also aware of the role which professional organisations of ESOL teachers might play in directly recruiting teachers.

However, after reviewing the relevant literature (de la Cuesta Benjumea, 2014; Fjellström & Guttormsen, 2016), I realised that my understanding of gaining access, as being only an activity of securing pre-existing concrete information, would not work. I also understood that the actual dynamics of gaining and maintaining access required contacting key people, negotiating with them, building trust relationships prior to obtaining access to their sites.

Thinking about access: my naïve understanding of gaining entry

My thoughts about access have been always evolving. Although I had initial plans for access, my understanding of access was that it is a one-direction activity. I thought that access could be achieved just by following the outcome of a Google search about *[ESOL PTEs in Christchurch]*. When I tried this approach, the outcome of this online search process was a list of physical addresses and contact information of PTEs in Christchurch. Naively, I considered this list as my complete set of tools to access the field. This attitude towards gaining was based on my understanding of *[entry]* as my biggest challenge. As a result, I focused on choosing sites, collecting contact information, and thinking of modes to approach them such as emails, phone calls or possibly visiting sites in person.

My experience in the field suggested that the notion of *Google search* as a method of gaining access to research sites lacked sufficient understanding of the sociocultural dimensions of this activity. Feldman, Bell & Berger (2003) argued that associating access with the term *[entry]* reflects researchers' efforts to search for, select and reach sites, but it is not sufficient to understand the multidimensional nature of access. Consequently, I decided to switch my focus from *[Google search]* to what was beyond these physical addresses such as communities of teachers, their human interactions and relationships among the targeted individuals as was recommended by Fjellström and Guttormsen (2016).

Another pitfall of my initial *Google search* attitude towards gaining access was that it ignored the notion of individual's rights to accept or reject the participation in this study, or the gatekeeper's power to limit my access to a specific type of information. For example, some teachers refused to participate in my study, as they were overwhelmed with other tasks. Others

were not interested at all in participating in a study, as they were not interested in questioning their own professional practices. Another group of teachers were hesitant to express their views about some political issues of their professional practice such as discussing ESOL as business status in PTEs until they made sure that I would not divulge this information to a third party. This required building bridges of trust with participants to reveal information about their practices comfortably, and required planning three interviews with participant teachers rather than having one interview. Thus, allocating research sites does not always mean the possibility of recruiting participants in them, as the decision to participate in this study meant attending three interviews and answering three to four emails which might be an extra burden for participant teachers.

Thinking about gaining access was also associated with the challenge of maintaining ties and rapport with organisations as well as individuals over a period of about nine months. For instance, I managed to recruit a group of four participants in one institution and successfully had them attend the first interview. Then, the circumstances changed, and the whole institution went through a scrutinised New Zealand Qualification Authority's (NZQA) investigation, and the whole organisation was in a vulnerable position. Therefore, I could maintain access to neither the site, nor the individuals. Although participants were still at the same physical address, I could not merely knock on the door and enter.

Another level of tension which was associated with data collection was maintaining access after gaining it. Some literature discussed the importance of maintaining access (de la Cuesta Benjumea, 2014) as a crucial activity during data collection. Feldman, Bell and Berger (2003) noted that gaining access does not always mean maintaining it, as "access like research itself, is a dynamic process". Others (Roesch-Marsh, Gadda, & Smith, 2012) also discussed the tendency of organisations to adopt a protectionist stance while allowing research access, and the existence of "hard to research groups" opposing the notion of guaranteed access to some research sites (Grant, 2017). As stated earlier, there were some topics that the participant teachers were not willing to discuss comfortably in the first interview.

Entering the private ESOL teaching field

When I first came to Christchurch, ESOL teaching acted as a source of income and a way to gain and maintain access to the field. My attempts to recruit participants and maintain the professional connection with them were not entirely successful when I tried to approach teachers as an outsider. a researcher who sought to recruit participants for a research study

about ESOL teachers' professional practice. Although the topic has initially been received well by teachers, some of them lost their enthusiasm after a short time. Then, I needed to shift my position in teachers' eyes from an outsider researcher into a colleague teacher to be able to maintain professional ties and work with them to find the suitable time and place to conduct the three interviews. The Methodology chapter describes the challenges I faced in arranging three interviews for every participant over a period of nine months in some cases.

As an ESOL teacher in Christchurch, I started my first class, and the looks of my students were whispering things such as "oh, a non-native teacher again; we are not here for this", I could almost hear their thoughts saying "let's wait and see what he can do". Feldman, Bell and Berger (2003) claimed that researchers need to attract the attention of key people in the site to gain enough access (p. x). To gain students' loyalty, I tended to demonstrate my best teaching practices in the first week, so I could leave a good first impression on my students. Fortunately, this technique worked, and I started growing a good reputation in a few institutions in the city that allowed me to teach part-time. Gaining the loyalty of students allowed me to move comfortably towards gaining access to gatekeepers and teachers, as well.

Teaching English in Christchurch gave me an entry to the field, and secured more opportunities to maintain access to gatekeepers and participants. Grant (2017) differentiated between gaining entry and access by arguing that having official entry to an organisation would not stop access challenges to rise occasionally (p. 4). In my personal experience, working as an ESOL teacher gave me better chances of entry to PTEs, and increased my chance of building bridges with participants. I was able to understand teachers' work conditions such as being overwhelmed with other tasks, and this made me more appreciative of their participation and flexible with scheduling and rescheduling the interview meetings when needed. Published literature (de la Cuesta Benjumea, 2014; Grant, 2017) highlighted the role of researcher's status in relation to the researched group as either insiders or outsiders, and stated that it might impact researchers' chances to have access to the field.

Gaining access to organisations, the macro level

Gaining entry to the field as described above allowed me to gain access to the gatekeepers such as institutions' academic managers and principals. Shenton and Hayter (2004) noted that gatekeepers can decline the researcher's request to gain access to their organisations, and prevent them from reaching all the potential participants (p. 223). After unsuccessful multiple trials to address individual teachers, I decided to build bridges with gatekeepers by providing

them with honest information and consent sheets that describe the researcher's role, objectives, responsibilities and obligations.

Adopting this attitude towards gaining access through addressing gatekeepers might be due to my background. In my home country, gaining access to participants might require recommendations from a higher authority such as the Ministry of Education or the Education Council. Without these higher authorities, a researcher might not have access to research sites or might have limited access to participants. Describing access negotiation, Grant (2017) noted that tensions around gaining access normally exist on the macro level when researchers try to gain official access to senior managers (p. 1). In Christchurch PTEs, I did not have connections with a higher authority, I thought about finding other options of negotiating access on the macro level and building bridges with gatekeepers such as creating a shared identity.

Grant (2017) suggested that creating a shared benefit between the researcher and the researched organisation might facilitate access to gatekeepers. Therefore, I thought of sharing my ideas about the benefits organisations would have by conducting my study in their premises with gatekeepers. While gaining access to gatekeepers, they might feel entitled to some benefits to their organisations in an exchange relationship known in some studies as reciprocity (Shenton & Hayter, 2004). In this research study, in addition to agreeing with institution managers on the importance of my research study to the improvement of ESOL teachers' professional practice, there were other strategies through which I managed to create strong professional ties with gatekeepers. In one institution, I worked as a substitute teacher to save the situation of an unplanned call in sick. After that, students' feedback about my teaching encouraged them to give me a full time contract. Grant (2017) noted that different levels of power affect the researcher's access to data (p. 2). Building a strong relationship with managers in one of the organisations was a turning point in gaining access to teachers there, as they offered their full support and signed the principals' consent sheet immediately after I signed their work contract.

Gaining access to gatekeepers often guaranteed full access to this particular research site and teachers. Roesch-Marsh and others (2012) argued that gaining access to gatekeepers can be associated with categorisations of "who is who", and the way gatekeepers categorise researchers can affect the research findings. For example, when I was introduced to teachers by their managers, teachers' willingness to participate in my research study was higher compared to their participation when I approached them individually. In one of the organisations, the manager was able to arrange one meeting with all the teachers in this

organisation in one session to hear about my research study. I would not be able to find a time or a place to gather all the teachers in this organisation without the support of their manager. Although gaining access to a gatekeeper seemed a very important step towards recruiting participants, my actual experience suggests some challenges, especially when participants are supposed to attend more than one interview. I have to admit that gaining access to gatekeepers in PTEs was not a guarantee that I could maintain access to participant teachers.

Gaining and maintaining access to participate, the micro level

Another level of negotiating access discussed by Grant (2017) is the micro level that described gaining access to participants. Feldman, Bell and Berger (2003) noted that collecting data requires not only gaining access to participants, but also appealing to them and gaining their trust (p. 3). This explains my decision to have three interviews over a period of four to nine months which enabled me to gain their trust and allowed them to reveal rich data about their professional practice.

In this research study, creating a professional relationship with ESOL teachers in Christchurch was achieved through various strategies. I tried building bridges through making phone calls, emailing teachers, and sometimes visiting sites in person. Then, I realised that one effective strategy is to teach English in these PTEs; Shenton and Hayter (2004) talked about “prolonged engagement” with participants. Applying this concept allowed me to create rapport with participants and diminish any sense of threat accompanying my early presence in the institutions. In addition, De La Cuesta (2014) highlighted the importance of direct interaction with participants to learn about their experiences (p. 481), as this is the way data can be obtained rather than collected. Therefore, she and others (de la Cuesta Benjumea, 2014; Grant, 2017) discussed other sociocultural influencers that might hinder or facilitate access to participants such as the researcher’s social skills, gender, age, ethnicity, and personal appearance.

However, the early days of negotiating entry were expected to pose tensions and challenges to researchers (de la Cuesta Benjumea, 2014; Grant, 2017). Although I worked in the same place, there were sociocultural issues. Coming from a different background and from a different culture made me an outsider to teachers, and this required building social ties with teachers to overcome this sense of being an outsider. For example, I was hesitant to accept an invitation for a teachers’ dinner, as I was still new to New Zealand and knew little about socialising norms. However, I decided to attend that dinner to strengthen ties with teachers which affected

the type of stories and data participants shared with me afterward. Teachers' opinions about their institutions before and after shifting my status from an outsider to and an insider varied, and showed the extent to which teachers felt comfortable to divulging certain information.

Modes of approach and grappling with cultural norms

This research study aimed to collect rich data about teachers' work life experiences to describe their professional practice. Bondy (2013) noted that modes of communication with participants are strongly connected to external influences that surround their work conditions. This section describes modes of communication and various influences which emerged during my attempts to gain and maintain access to PTEs.

Literature about gaining and maintaining access (Grant, 2017; Roesch-Marsh et al., 2012; Shenton & Hayter, 2004) suggested reaching gatekeepers and getting their permission before accessing participants. In his study about gaining access to prisons in the United States, Bondy (2013) noted that he received support from the director and co-director of a rehabilitation centre in California in gaining access to research sites. Similarly, I personally believe that gaining access to sites can possibly be achieved through building strong professional relationships with gatekeepers and mediators. This relationship with mediators would highly guarantee approval to conduct my study in their institutions and increases teachers' participation, as well. This strategy is called a *sponsor approach* which recommended gaining access through a higher authority in the field (Shenton & Hayter, 2004). Describing the challenges of gaining access to sites and individuals, Fjellstrom and others (2015) stressed the importance of finding the right person to facilitate the researcher's access (p. 115). Others (de la Cuesta Benjumea, 2014; Grant, 2017) suggested that this activity of negotiating access to a specific group of participants might require a higher authority or a mediator to access such "hard to reach" groups, as highlighted earlier in this chapter.

In Christchurch, I decided to approach institutions and ask to meet principals in person. However, gaining access to gatekeepers in Christchurch seemed quite unique. According to my initial plan, one morning I left my accommodation and drove towards one of the institutions. When I reached the site, I made sure that I parked my car in the right parking area, and carried my folders in my bag and walked towards the entrance. It was a small institution with a few traditional classrooms. At the reception, there was a middle aged lady sitting behind a glass wall which brought bank tellers to my mind. With a wide smile, I greeted her, introduced myself as a Ph.D. researcher, and asked to meet the institution principal or the head teacher.

The lady asked me to have a seat, and she raised the phone and talked to the principal. I sat on a wooden armchair and picked up one of their pamphlets which described some of their ESOL programmes. According to the pamphlet, their ESOL programme was based on multiculturalism and merging students from various backgrounds. I waited for around thirty minutes, and the lady called me from behind that glass wall, smiled and said that the principal was still in a meeting. Then, she suggested that I had better send an email to arrange a time for a meeting. Then, I realised that I might have chosen the wrong mode of communication, so I took the contact information and went home and wrote an email to the principal about my research summary and the institution's role and teacher's expected roles in my research study. However, I never heard from the principal. I tried this way with another three schools, but I never heard from any of them.

After unsuccessful communication with organisations, I thought again about the mediator's role in accessing gatekeepers. In my experience in Christchurch, the mediator did not have to be a person. At my early stages, I did not know many people in the field, so I did not have the privilege of asking a friend to arrange a meeting for me with gatekeepers. Benjumea (2014) suggested researchers should create a balanced relationship with the researched people, "they should not feel exploited or used" (de la Cuesta Benjumea, 2014, p. 485). I thought about making my research appealing to gatekeepers by showing some benefits that participants will have, and introduced my offer as a win-win situation for the organisation and the researcher. I also offered my help as a teacher PLD facilitator to present some of the workshops which I presented in ESOL conferences for free. Then, I decided to use these advantages as the mediator which might get gatekeepers to consider scheduling a meeting for me with teachers. This strategy seemed effective in two institutions and I managed to meet principals and had promises of considering my request to conduct my study in these sites.

Goodman (2001) noted that some researchers could gain access to a hard-to-reach site such as prisons by being a respected researcher in the field or by securing a job as a guard there (Goodman, 2011, p. 600). Another effective mode of approaching gatekeepers was by teaching in their PTEs. Being a part of institutions created the bond with principals and made accessing their offices much easier. This gave me various options of verbal and written modes of communication to choose when and where to approach gatekeepers. In addition, I did not feel worried when they asked for more time to confirm with business owners or higher management before approving my request. I was sure we would meet on daily basis and this

constantly reminded them of my request. Working in PTEs made me feel like an insider, and gave me the privilege of gaining access to sites, and teachers.

In conclusion, sociocultural and political influencers changed my views of modes of approaching gatekeepers. Communication modes could be negotiated and renegotiated according to the researched circumstances. Therefore, in my case, understanding the sociocultural and political influences in the research field shaped and sometimes changed modes of approaching gatekeepers and participants. Gaining access to the work field was a multidimensional process in all its aspects such as modes of approach, gaining access, maintaining access.

Gaining access and external influences

Shifting between identities is one of the key sociocultural and sometimes political challenges that I faced as a qualitative researcher. During my gaining and maintaining access to gatekeepers and participants, I had to negotiate the different identities of a researcher, a PLD specialist, a naïve listener, and an ESOL teacher to maximise my chances of securing access to data. For instance, I was interviewing one of the participants who asked me to help her conducting a workshop about ESOL teaching techniques to a group of teachers as she knew that I have expertise in this area. However, conducting this particular workshop required shifting between the naïve listener and the PLD expert identities. This resonates with the various social challenges which other researchers reported during maintaining access to participants. For example, describing their experience in gaining access to people operating informal micro businesses in South Africa, Kondowe and Booyens (2014) noted that they had to deal with a society that has a high level of unemployment and crime rates.

In addition, relevant literature noted that gaining access is a relational activity. It is not always based on decisions made by the researcher or the researched groups (Feldman et al., 2003). Some political influences were present in my experience of gaining and maintaining access. There were factors that decided the amount and type of data which I was able to obtain such as the time when NZQA locked some institutions for investigations because of lack of standardised assessment tasks which blocked my access to participants.

Summary

Gaining and maintaining access to research sites in this research study was a socially situated process. It was associated with negotiation of identities, trying a sponsored approach, creating

a shared identity with the researched, offering my help and consultation services to organisations, and building professional relationships with gatekeepers and participants. These techniques and methods were essential to facilitate gaining and maintaining access to research sites. Thus, it was necessary to report my experience of the process of gaining and maintaining access to research sites and participants before moving to their stories to illustrate the sociocultural aspects which surrounded data collection and identified this research study context. The following chapters present the narratives of the five participants as reported in the semi-structured interviews.

Chapter Five: Mary the Resilient

“I almost decided to quit, but I thought, I need to keep fighting using my best attitude. Then, I ended up winning” (Mary, 2019)

Getting to know Mary:

Mary is an ESOL teacher in one of the private training establishments (PTEs) in Christchurch. She has a bachelor’s degree in teaching the English language, and completed a certificate in English language teaching (CELTA). In her home country, she taught different ages from pre-school to university in different sectors including private and government ones for about eleven years. In New Zealand, she had taught English for almost two years and held various roles in schools and institutions including administrative and teaching roles.

In New Zealand, she mainly taught in one PTE which provided programmes in business management, information technology, and New Zealand Certificate in English Language (NZCEL). Like other ESOL programmes, NZCEL required students to complete specific assessment unit standards to pass to the next level. According to Mary, this strict assessment process creates pressure on teachers, as they have to do test-oriented teaching and mark loads of practice tasks and final assessment papers on a weekly basis. She said:

When you teach general English, of course, your teaching is based on a course book, you concentrate on all the skills. However, in NZCEL, you prepare the students to pass that specific unit standard and the timeframe you have is so short. You cannot actually teach them integrated skills all the time. For example, in our course one week they have writing, another week they have reading, so you have four days or less (for each skill). You cannot develop a skill in three days!

I still remember when I first met Mary in that PTE. One weekend I got a phone call to work as a reliever teacher in one of the ESOL institutions in Christchurch. During the morning tea break, in a small area dedicated to teachers’ and students’ break time, I started talking to teachers, including Mary, about my background and why I worked and lived in New Zealand. Mary had this warm welcoming attitude of the Latin American people which was pretty much similar to people in my home country. Her wide smile and welcoming manner coated our discussions, and this saved time to build bridges with her. She always spoke in a ringing voice that reflected her enthusiasm and genuine feelings. Therefore, the academic manager’s

recommendation along with the way she talked about teaching and her eagerness to learn about modern teaching techniques encouraged me to choose Mary as a participant.

The three interviews

Getting teachers to dedicate time for the three interviews was not a simple task. As a teacher in a private institution, Mary has expressed being overwhelmed by lesson planning, teaching, assessment and grading students' work. Asking her to dedicate time for three interviews while she had to juggle institutional and students' needs seemed like asking much from her. Almost all participants in this study found it hard to dedicate time for interviews, and Mary was not an exception in this regard.

When I first talked to Mary about my study, she confidently showed interest in participating in the study. After signing the information and consent sheets, it took me a few months to start data collection. During these months I was able to create stronger ties with Mary by working in the same institution and having informal discussions with her about teaching and students' learning whenever we met during breaks.

I sent her an email about the first interview and followed that by a verbal reminder to email me on her availability. Being a teacher in the same institution allowed me to become more understanding of her work environment. Thus, I was always open to rescheduling the interviews when any unexpected problems arose such as unexpected students' placement duties that usually take most of her afternoon time. I waited for Mary to confirm the time for our first meeting, and we managed to have the first interview that lasted for twenty-three minutes during her lunch break.

Planning for the second interview took a longer time compared to the first one, as it was supposed to be longer so we were not able to have it during the lunch break. We also agreed that Mary needed to bring an artefact that reflected the change in her classroom practices. When I emailed her to arrange for our second interview, it took her time to answer my email and confirm her availability. We also had to reschedule several times until she was able to meet me after work hours. Thus, we could have a longer meeting which was a thirty-two-minute interview. When I met her in the institution, she was sitting in her classroom marking a big pile of students' writing assignments. She appeared exhausted after a long working day, but she insisted on having the interview.

Planning for the third and final interview was much easier. We agreed to meet after school again, and she replied to my email confirming her availability. I just confirmed our timing with a short text message one day before the meeting. I drove to the institution, and I was shocked to see her leaving the school and heading towards the street. I thought she had another meeting before the interview, but she told me that she was heading home. She totally forgot about our meeting. We laughed about it, and I suggested rescheduling, but she said she was ready to attend the third interview on that day. Mary reported that she was extremely curious, determined and motivated to participate in this study asserting that she wanted to read the complete narrative and final results of this study.

Teaching ESOL in two different contexts

Talking about her teaching background, Mary stated that she started teaching English in her home country where she shared the same mother tongue with students. She made the best use of similarities between students' first language and the English language asserting that:

I used to teach students who were Spanish students, so we didn't have any language barriers. If they had questions, I can clarify in Spanish. I could use for example structures that we use in Spanish to show them something.

Asking her about teaching challenges, she stated that, in her home country, she felt she was aware of students' needs, culture, background and first language. On the other hand, she noted that her experience in Christchurch was different. Although some international students in Christchurch still come from her home country, she cannot use her first language to facilitate their learning; inside the classroom her students speak three to four different languages. She also confirmed that students' ages are different and they come to the institution with different learning needs. She noted:

Students did not tell us what they want to do. They just received what we tell them. They knew that this was the programme for the group and that's what they needed to learn, that's it. Here, students interact and tell me what they want.

When I asked her about how this challenge affected her actual teaching practices in Christchurch, she replied:

My way of teaching and my way of planning changed, even the things I used, the resources I had. I needed to change them almost every day. I had

to prepare myself in a better way because it was not only grammar, they also wanted skills. They wanted to learn more things so I needed to prepare myself to do that.

Students' preferences

Continuing talking about the shifts in her professional practice from her home country to Christchurch as a teacher she noted that it was a complicated process. She shared an example of the complexity of this shift with me when she talked about the experience she had with a group of students when she felt challenged by her students' wants and preferences. She said:

I had a group at the very beginning. They hated me in the first two weeks, because I was not like their previous teacher. So they complained in the first week; they made a mess, keep complaining, they didn't give me a chance.

In this specific institution, there was a branch manager who managed both business and English language programmes. She felt that the institution management has not provided support when she was challenged by students' needs. She asserted:

The school pressured me a lot. A person who was in charge, not my coordinator, a person who was higher than my coordinator told me that we are getting lots of complaints about you, and if the situation doesn't change in about a month or so, you are fired!

She continued by saying that she was under a lot of stress and felt frustrated and unsafe. She did not know what to do in response to students' complaints and management's attitude towards students' demands. The management's attitude towards this issue put her career in jeopardy for a long time. She said:

So I had pressure from outside pressure from inside. I had a lot of pressure, that's how we work. Most probably if I didn't agree with this square, I am fired.

She continued by describing this experience saying that she started hating to enter the class. Every day she dragged her feet towards the class while she was emotionally exhausted. She explained how this experience affected her mental and physical health. She noted:

That put so much stress on me that I didn't even want to go. I didn't want to teach. I went there knowing that I didn't want to. I cried a lot because it put so much pressure on me; I'm feeling bad like stomach ache and headache stress I'm feeling so insecure all the time. It was a month and a half of fighting and I hate coming to the class and crying every morning when I go there and crying every day after class.

I curiously asked her about what she did about this challenge. She sadly said that she felt vulnerable, and she felt that she needed help and support. Then, she continued by saying that she chose to be open and share a few classroom issues with her colleagues at work. She said:

Only people who worked with me facilitated my learning.

However, she did not share these moments of crying and feeling sick with anybody beyond her family. After that, she chose to talk openly to students and noted that she made these decisions after being under the pressure of students, and the institution management. She asserted that she addressed the students saying:

Look, I want you to be happy in my class, and I want to be happy because I am the teacher. I cannot be your previous teacher because many reasons
a) we are from different counties b) I am a female c) we all are different people.

Continuing talking about this challenge, she noted that she started reflecting on her teaching practices and figured out solutions for this challenge. She asserted:

I really wanted to leave the country because I thought I couldn't find a place for me here. And then I reflected on my teaching, I started thinking, and I told them “if you want to talk to me please stay after the class”. They stayed, three or four of them stayed. A student told me that I was not bad but I was not him (their previous teacher), so I will not be a good teacher in their eyes. Then, I said “look, I want you to be happy in my class, but I cannot be your previous teacher”. Then, I asked them to start talking to me about classroom strategies.

She also stated that she reached the conclusion that she was an experienced teacher, and she should not submit to these challenges after all these years of experience. She concluded her

story in the third interview by saying that she felt that she had the right to fight. Then, she smiled with confidence and said that she fought in a good manner until she won. She said:

I thought ok; I do not have eleven years of experience just for no reason.
So, I chose to fight against that with my best attitude, and I ended up winning.

Mary reported that while interacting with the challenge of students' satisfaction, she learned how to maximise her learning resources and enhance her sense of intrinsic motivation. She also noted that she chose to adopt this attitude towards learning due to the lack of external motivation. She decided to get engaged in activities which allowed her to continue teaching the same group of students with fewer complaints from the students' side.

Making a difference in students' lives

Throughout our discussions about how she chose to face challenges, she highlighted her interest in students' learning and satisfaction on many occasions. Making a difference in students' lives was a big motivation for Mary to continue teaching. When I asked her about why students' satisfaction and dissatisfaction mattered, she answered confidently:

It is not for the money because let's face it, we do not have the best salary in the world. But I needed to do so. However, it is really time consuming because I go home every day, I keep working until eleven and nobody pays me that. I do not do it for money, and I do not even do it for me, I do it for them.

She continued by talking about these precious moments when she received a statement of recognition from students or just observed evidence of learning in their eyes and behaviours during the class. These moments of their success resembled her own success and added to the reasons why she wanted to be a teacher. She reported:

When I see them learning, when I hear the "AAAAH, that's was beautiful" this is the most beautiful thing in the world for me. Because they really understood something. When they come to me and say "look, I improved because of this and this; that is because of what you did with me". Or "I hated English before, and I really like it now". Or "nobody taught me this way". This is very rewarding; I love teaching.

When I asked her about how this attitude towards students' learning affected her actual teaching practices and decisions about her own professional learning, she confirmed that she always prioritised and was driven by learners' feedback and academic needs. She said:

It affects my teaching, of course, because when they did not like that I switched to something else. For example, I knew some of these groups, a group which I have right now, loved videos and hated songs. So, I started the lesson with TV shows. And again I had to learn about this.

Her teaching principles and institutional goals

When we started our discussions about how the management reacted to students' complaints, she highlighted the practices of PTEs managers and owners in response to students' complaints. She stated that the institution's management was always listening to students and treating them as if they are always right. She noted that management attitude lacked reflectivity. She asserted:

I mean the school should be critical. Sorry for using this word hundred times. But, imagine you have feedback from a teacher, his or her students had bad comments about him or her. You need to go inside the class observe the teacher several times, check her or his plans. And talk to the teacher. But some institutes will go and say, "Students do not like you, so bye". It is not like that.

This attitude towards work issues made her anxious to the extent that she doubted her abilities and skills as an ESOL teacher who has been in the field for more than eleven years, she reported:

At the very beginning, I was really uncomfortable. I didn't have a lot of self-esteem at that moment.

Asked about the role of school management in her professional learning and teaching practices, Mary said that she did not get much support from the school management. She emphasised that when students complained about her teaching, all she got was just a reminder of her being in jeopardy. She was literally told that she had to meet the students' expectations in order not to lose her job. Then, she sighed after deep thinking and said that the problem of the management is that they are not ESOL specialists or do not come from an ESOL background. She thought that ESOL institutions' management should have a balance of ESOL and management experts. She noted:

I think the best thing we could have is double ownership, a teacher and a businessman. This is because they could take care of two aspects. If at the end of the day only a businessman is the owner, business is going to happen, not teaching.

Business management values and teaching principles

She added that the key issue of PTEs management was that they were business oriented rather than being ESOL educators. For example, she stated that her manager had a business management background and he taught at universities. He taught different subjects such as business management, but he had no classroom experience of ESOL teaching, so he would not know much about real ESOL classroom issues and practices. She said that the pool of managers and owners in Christchurch was composed of fewer ESOL qualified people while most of them were business-oriented. In her view, this affected her professional practice dramatically. She described her experience and said:

In reality, there are people who have no idea about education and they are ruling an institution, so they think in terms of numbers, not in terms of quality of education or standards. They think in terms of money, how we can get more money. If you check, check all the institutions in Christchurch, and tell me which one has a teacher as a head? None of them! You may find a coordinator as a teacher, but the owner of the institute is always a businessman. So when you go and tell the businessman the standards and the things we should do that could not be good in terms of numbers, they are not going to listen to you!

When I asked her how institutions facilitated her professional learning, she answered with confidence that they hardly offer anything. The managers and owners of PTEs downplay in-service teachers' professional learning and development. She said that they were not willing to conduct in-service teachers' PLD activities for ESOL teachers, as this means more financial constraints for institutions' budgets. She said:

Last year, I talked with the CEO of the company and I said why you do not facilitate workshops! Your teachers improve, your classes improve, and you get more students. It is as simple as that. They say "No", because this will cost money.

She also shared with me the story when the institution offered PLD about pre and post moderation that allowed her to understand assessment unit standards. However, these PLD were typical one-size-fits-all sessions which were not directly connected to her personalised learning needs. She went on to explain the lack of PLD to the extent that the institution management rejected her request to support teachers completing a formal postgraduate diploma in teaching English to adults (DELTA). In a sad tone, she confirmed that she did not have the intention to leave the institution after becoming a DELTA holder. She also expressed her shock when the management refused to submit an application for her to complete the DELTA even after she told them that she was willing to pay the fees to them. She said that all she wanted from them was to book the programme for her, as they would get a corporate rate as an institution in comparison to the price she might get as an individual. She affirmed:

They say we want teachers who are prepared with lots of degrees with this and that, but they are not willing to help you or pay for it. For example, when I wanted to do the DELTA, and I knew that if they pay DELTA, for me it is cheaper, and even I can give them the money. They said “No”.

She asserted that they feared empowering teachers, so teachers would get a better job in a different place. She felt that their institution’s management wanted to keep the teachers under their control and limit their learning to the institutional needs, so they would not get better offers from other institutions. When I asked her about the reasons the management might limit teachers’ learning, she answered with full confidence saying “it was all about business”. She stated that institutions’ owners were only worried about revenue making. She said:

It is money. Also, they thought, if we get more qualifications, we will go away. But I can't go away anyway. In my country schools work with loyalty. Schools prepare you and help you to improve. So you are loyal to them.

She concluded that this challenging atmosphere brought unbearable suffering and affected her professional practices. She noted that it made her doubt her abilities as a teacher, and these feelings decreased her motivation. She asserted:

I thought I was not the right teacher for the course. I wanted to leave the country.

Instructions from higher management

She talked about her actual classroom practices and how she is open to change. She shared with me a story about her students practising reading aloud for comprehension. Once her students asked her to allow them to read aloud for comprehension because they used to do this with their previous teachers. She decided not to fully respond to them, and challenged their ideas. Simultaneously, she was keen on meeting their needs by adding more drilling activities, and made them read silently. She continued by confirming that she wanted to meet students' needs and concurrently satisfy her professional values. She said:

Because I have critical thinking skills, I knew when I would do something and not the other. I told them: look, I'm not going to do it, but if you want to practice pronunciation, we can find a way. I found a way that was appropriate in my point of view. So I introduce more phonetic activities, more drilling, and I introduced games like twist tongue, and with that, they felt good. I was kind of doing what they want because that was their aim, but I was not against what I thought.

However, she said that stakeholders who had the power to force change inside classrooms, either knew little about the actual teaching practices or they have stopped teaching. This escalated the tension between her sense of being a teacher and the surrounding society that might have different goals. She continued by saying that in similar conditions in her home country, she had decided to quit her job and submit a resignation letter from an institution she worked for. She confirmed:

In my home country, I stopped teaching at school because they did that to me, they imposed ideas that I thought they are not beneficial for the students. At that time, I was teaching at a high school.

She continued by talking about the gap between the PTE's view of ESOL teaching and the teachers' beliefs and actual practices. She used the students' assessment as an example of how higher authorities practice pressure on teachers on various teaching matters. She stated that she was asked to pass some students whom she decided to mark as failed, but she refused to sign these assessment papers. When I asked her about why an institution would take the risk of changing the results of failing students to pass them, she said that they wanted to make students happy so that they have more students. She added that this creates huge pressure on teachers who have to either be part of these procedures or resign from their work. She claimed:

Institutes have students, they needed students to be happy. When they are losing students, they tell you they need to make them happy and they start doing things that I do not agree with. So what they do is to start pressuring teachers.

Mary felt vulnerable

This pressure on teachers reached its peak when she was asked to implement some practices inside the classroom which she considered unethical. She noted that these unethical practices might take place in PTEs, and teachers might not have full control as there was a large number of ESOL teachers who needed a teaching job and a smaller number of jobs. She said:

As you know, there are lots of teachers, but there is there not enough students.

She concluded that in this specific private teaching context, teachers are obliged to be responsive to the institutional needs or they might lose their jobs. She affirmed:

Most of the time, as teachers, we do not agree (with the institution's directives) but we need a job. So it is really hard sometimes because there are a lot of teachers here. You know it is hard to find a job. So it is a fine line between being loyal to my views and having a job. You are responsive to the business needs, if not they make you redundant. We might end up having no courses for you because we do not have enough students.

She tried to figure issues out

Towards the end of the first interview, she summarised learning challenges she faced as an ESOL teacher in PTEs. She talked about how she felt as an ESOL teacher and said:

You are alone. If you do not pressure yourself, no one will do it. And we are not in a university, so nobody is telling us "you need to handle this, you need to read this." You need to do it on your own.

She went on to argue that in PTEs teachers' needed to take the initiative to learn, as nobody else would do so for them. As a reaction to these challenges, she reported that she decided to fight for her right as an experienced teacher. Mary chose to fight challenges by getting engaged in various learning activities. However, this approach towards work issues was not easy to embrace. She commented:

I did not have a choice! That was the point. I just needed to change. It was challenging. It was hard, and at the same time, it was not really pleasant. I felt that at the beginning I knew what I wanted to do, but I was still in the process of trying to do it.

When she talked about how she faced these challenges, in a firm tone she told me that she chose to face the students and ask them about their needs and the activities they needed to do in the classroom. She had the courage to talk openly to her students and learned from them when the management gave her no choice but to face the problems on her own. She said:

I talked with the previous teacher of the group, and he told me what he was doing with them. I also talked to them and told them that the teacher told me this? What do you want? What do you expect? Because they had different expectations.

Asked about being responsive to her students' needs, her answers varied from the first to the third interview. In the first interview, she said that it was necessary to understand her students' reactions, facial expressions and level of engagement during the class. On many occasions, she shared stories about changing her teaching plan immediately and inside the classroom when she noticed that they were just using their mobiles during the class as an indicator of boredom. She noted:

My students, you can see that you lose their attention. You see them, the cell phone is their best friend, and if a class is good they will forget about the phones. If they start not looking at you and talking to each other or play with their phones. I see their faces, I know they are not interested, I change it completely.

She noticed that she evolved some skills which helped her become a better teacher. This change in her teaching came as a gradual change. She stated that her learning allowed her to be more flexible and more understanding of students' issues with the minimum of compromising of her identity and professional standards. In the third interview, she commented on her being responsive to students' needs differently. She stated that she was no longer adopting students' needs without questioning them. She came up with alternative teaching techniques that suited both students' needs and satisfied her beliefs as a teacher. She confirmed:

I am also very critical. If you come to me and tell me I do not like the way you teach. I will ask you “why?”, and you will have to give me a reason.

When I asked Mary about what else provoked her learning she referred to the sociocultural context around her that always acted as a catalyst. When she felt alone, the stress of work context made her use all surrounding learning resources such as discussing issues with other teachers. She said:

I think we all felt alone, and we all felt that either we kept together or we are not going to make it.

Being curious and intrinsically motivated

Mary’s understanding of curiosity was rooted in her experience as a student, as she always talked about herself as a critical thinking student. She reflected on the time when she was a student, and affirmed that the best teachers in her eyes were those who used to ask her “why”. She respected and always remembered those teachers who encouraged her to think critically. She noted:

The good ones I remember that they always ask me “why?” If I provide a definition it doesn't matter if it was correct or incorrect. Their answer was, “why?” And this kept that question in my head, so I keep asking myself “why and why?” That’s what keeps me developing ideas so I don't understand things as they are; I understand why things are in a way.

Mary noted that she was not a native speaker, so she had the inner feeling that she needs to keep this curiosity about learning all the time. This was an intrinsic feeling that always encouraged her to learn. In all her stories about learning, she showed this inner need for learning that motivated her not only to overcome challenges such as the students’ satisfaction and managerial inertia, but also to keep going on and maintain a reasonable pace of learning and development. The inner need of learning that she described included being curious, intrinsic motivation, sharing knowledge, and encouraging other teachers to learn. She said:

I am not a native, as you know. I think I need to keep on studying all the time because if I stop, that will stop my knowledge of the language. I love reading a lot so every now and then I start asking my colleagues if they are reading books, which books they are reading. I'm really interested in a method, but again when I have problems I have to go to books. I know how

to teach writing, but there were some specific needs that I had to go back to previous books for. I have like the library, I am very curious.

She also commented on her intrinsic motivation and how it was important for her to make progress not only in her teaching career, but also in life in general. She stated:

I think if you don't motivate yourself, it is impossible to achieve progress in life. So the only person who could motivate me was myself and my students. I see them happy when they tell me I really liked your class. I felt really well prepared for my unit standards, and I am a person who first needs to think about the information alone. I am that kind of person. I ask myself the questions then I try to find answers, and with those answers, I go and talk with someone else.

She also noted that her curiosity and intrinsic motivation allowed her to encourage other teachers to get engaged in PLD activities and enhance their professional practice, as well. When I asked her about the reason she chose to talk to other teachers about change in her professional practice, she said:

I felt the necessity to do it and also because I found people on my way that we're ready and they were willing to help me.

Talking to colleagues

Mary talked repeatedly about taking charge of her professional practice by identifying her learning needs and using the internet to find answers as her first learning resource. She also stated that she talked to colleagues about teaching challenges. This allowed her to create bonds and social relationships with other teachers at work. Mary reported that the outcome of this engagement in teachers' talk impacted her classroom practices positively. She noted:

I think I have improved a lot. Now I have lots of knowledge that I did not have in the past. I remember in our first interview I told you I really do not know how this works. Now I feel, thanks to them, I know a little bit more, and I feel more secure. Because I understood that we all have these different points of view but I need to be sure they also taught me to be sure of my own view.

When I asked her how she maximised teacher talk's benefits, she said that she listened carefully to them and tried to learn from their experiences. She noted that she applied what they said

worked in their classroom, and reflected on this by giving them feedback on her own practices. She had further discussions with colleagues about whether their suggestions worked in her classroom or not. Mary also reported that she was not blindly listening to teachers and applying exactly what worked in their classrooms before measuring this against her knowledge. She said that she modified activities before and after applying them to her classrooms. She added:

I am a very critical person. So I need to remember what they gave me. Then, I think why it was good for me, and try to find a theoretical idea to support that. Then, if I have all that I will implement it in my class. You can tell me “this is amazing and this is the best thing that ever happened to you, go and use it”, but I will not use it. First I will think about it, the type of a student I have, and the kind of person I am.

When I asked her about how this attitude towards learning affected her teaching practices, she laughed and said that this affected her teaching in many ways. She talked about how this learning attitude made her more flexible towards change, more confident about her teaching practices, more rational in her choices, and strengthened the ties between her and colleagues at work. She kept talking about how she chose teachers to share her learning experiences with them. Then, she informed me about her selection criteria of teachers who are reflective. She talks to teachers and tries to understand their characters before making the decision to learn from them. She said:

I talk in order to get to know my colleagues, I talk a lot with them. I talk about their classes and how do they see teaching, and how do they deal with unit standards and their students. and through their answers I try to find similarities with me or even things that are different, so I just tell them my idea and ask them questions: for example, I have a problem can you help me with this? If they say yes, it shows that they are willing to do it.

She also continued by saying

First, of course, I do not talk to everyone, I really need to trust you, in order to talk to you.

However, establishing rapport with students and colleagues was daunting and required much effort. It eased the pressure on her and enhanced her enthusiasm; she found it rewarding and started sharing her findings with other teachers. She explained:

For example, new teachers or someone who has the experience, still we develop together and we kept on growing, growing and growing, and that is my idea. I used to depend a lot on institutions, but not anymore.

She noted that they can develop together and help each other rather than relying on PTEs, as she realised that institutions have different business-oriented directives.

Taking control

Mary went on to say that it was difficult to learn on her own. In the beginning, she did not know how to manage this type of learning. She noted:

It took me a long way to reach that lesson plan. If you see my first to plan you want to cry. I love looking at those plans. Every time I teach, I'm not using the same plans. I keep changing them.

She also added that she felt that she has become better at understanding and adopting other peoples' teaching strategies. She realised that she was going in the right direction when she saw this in the feedback she received from her colleagues, students, and her own reflection on her teaching practices. When I asked her to walk me through an example of how her learning affected her professional practice, she said:

I know where to go, and I know how to make my learning effective. And I have more background. So it's like a pyramid: I keep on building it. My preparation for a class is completely different, the amount of knowledge I have now, the way I can answer questions. Now for example I have lots of books that I have in my computer and they are my background or my resources from when I first studied. I now have more than twenty five books.

Walking me through her experience of taking control over her own professional learning she insisted that at the beginning she knew that she wanted to improve her performance. However, she was still in the process of finding ways to create change. She said that she was engaged in a process of trial and error, but sometimes she felt that falling back into her old habit coloured most of her early attempts. She reported:

Is difficult not to fall on the old habits it's really hard. When it is really hard but it keeps me motivated. I think now I know more things and that keeps me want to learn more. I need to start and continue and continue and

continue and my teachers told me that when I was in university. When I got the degree, they told me this is your beginning point, the start of a race, now keep running.

Across the three interviews, Mary spoke about questioning her practices, experimenting with different teaching techniques, and designing her own teaching materials. In the second interview, she shared with me a story about teaching a lesson outside the school. She asked the students to leave the institution and go to a shopping mall to learn the language of giving directions. Then, she smiled and proudly talked about her current lesson plans and teaching practices. She said:

Yes, it is a skill, you judge things in a better way, and you have different skills. To find information, judge information, categorise it, analyse it, use it, and implement it; everything is different. If you see my plans in the past and you see them now. My plans are much better.

She also talked proudly about her current improved awareness of alternative teaching techniques, and noted that students' comments became very encouraging. She said that she was satisfied with the range of knowledge that she had acquired and did not have in the past. She thought that learning about teaching was the best thing that had happened to her, as she became knowledgeable, confident, and reflective. She asserted:

This taught me other ways and other tools. Ways of thinking and rethink my own ideas. I used to depend a lot on institutions, but not anymore.

Key themes that emerge

Looking back at Mary's story three themes stood out:

Coping with stress and maintaining commitment

The most interesting part of Mary's story covers her anecdotes about coping and maintaining a commitment in response to her work context. Her story presents a rich and lively image of her real day-to-day work life issues which contributed to my overall understanding of the nature of in-service teachers' practices and their own sense of resilience.

Overall, resilience in Mary's story shows the complicated relationship between her professional life as an ESOL teacher and the surrounding factors such as students, institutions' management and colleagues. In Mary's anecdotes, resilience is a socially situated process

which does not merely rely on her to decide on its nature. The way resilience was described in her stories showed that it is not a static or a one way process. This concurs with Gu and Day's (2013) perception of resilience as "a product of the interaction between personal biographies and events". Consistently, Mary stated that while she was fighting for her teaching principles and beliefs, there were a number of influences which brought dramatic experiences and events to her teaching and work life. She argued that she "had pressure from outside and pressure from inside; that's how we work". She referred to her inner sense of being a responsible teacher as well as interacting with the surrounding work environment. Gu and Day (2013) also suggested that resilience is a dynamic process, and has its internal and external factors which define the nature of teacher resilience (p. 26). Their perception of how teachers' resilience is constructed mirrors the social and political issues of in-service ESOL teachers in Mary's story which presented resilience as an essential part of her work life.

Mary shared the story of how she coped with work stress and pressure, and she reported that her sense of resilience was driven by a number of external stressors. First, she noted that she worked under the pressure of students complaining about her lessons. She also talked repeatedly about the difficulty of overcoming this challenge of strengthening and elevating students' motivation. It was obvious in her story that students represented a threatening external influence on her sense of resilience to the extent that she thought about leaving the field of ESOL teaching, and what added to the complexity of this situation was the attitude of the institution's management. While she was expecting the institution manager to investigate students' complaints professionally, her line manager threatened her. These sources of stress in Mary's work life are similar to those mentioned in the literature (Gu & Day, 2013; Howard & Johnson, 2004) which included students' classroom behaviours, lack of motivation and problems dealing with management.

Mary's story also shows that her resilience was not only provoked by difficulties. She confirmed that her sense of her own capacity to deal with difficulties was enhanced by receiving compliments from her students or just a sign of confirmation of learning. She argued that one of her best moments as a teacher was when students said they improved because of her work with them, or they started loving English after studying with her. This implies that teacher can provoke their sense of resilience by successful as well as difficult experiences. Teacher resilience in Mary's case seemed to be strongly connected to both stressors and successful experiences.

The multidimensionality of teacher resilience was discussed by Howard and Johnson (2004) whose perception of resilience moved it from being an individual responsibility of the teacher to include students and organisational roles. While resilience as a process can be connected to bouncing back after difficulties, Mary's resilience presented an indication that resilience is not only the outcome of hardship. Her capacity to maintain a sense of commitment as a responsible teacher was also provoked by her successful experiences of student success.

Mary's description of external influences also included the impact of changing cultural and social influences. She noted that she had a long experience teaching ESOL in her home country which was much less challenging compared to Christchurch. Norms of teaching in private ESOL organisations in her home country did not fit well with this particular PTE in Christchurch, and this led to disengagement rather than professional growth. Mary's lack of personal relevance to the work context resonated with Harrison's (2018) who highlighted the role of social and cultural aspects in building teacher's resilience.

Next to these external influences, Mary talked about internal factors which provoked her sense of resilience, such as being challenged by her own sense of being a teacher. On many occasions, she talked about her right to fight. She fought with ethics, but she had to fight. Mary's attitude highlighted the connection between her professional practices and resilience building. She was motivated by her sense of being a responsible teacher; the moral purpose of teaching as a profession. She reported that she knew that teaching ESOL in PTEs does not provide adequate remuneration for her work, but she continued to work as a teacher to help students. In this sense, Mary's reported a high inner sense of responsibility which concurred with Howard and Johnson's (2004) findings of teachers who chose to teach in disadvantaged places. They noted that teachers are usually motivated by their moral purpose which enables them to make a difference in students' lives.

This mixture of internal and external influences affects Mary's resilience, and probes the complex relationships between these influences. In addition, this adds to the understanding of the nature of teacher resilience as a process that cannot be separated from its relational and organisational aspects (Gu & Day, 2007, 2013). Mary's sense of resilience was not presented as an individual responsibility, as the social, and economic influences such as students' satisfaction, retention, and institutional needs have mediated her sense of commitment and coping with stress. Building resilience as presented in Mary's story was a socially constructed aspect of her professional practice in a commercially driven environment.

Operating within ESOL PTEs' constraints

Mary's story presented PTEs in Christchurch as a particular work environment which mediates teachers' practices and professional learning. In Mary's story, PTEs constraints can be divided into two essential sections; issues related to her professional knowledge and others that are connected to work context.

In relation to her issues as an ESOL teacher, Mary shared her story about when she needed to extend or even gain professional knowledge about some pedagogical matters such as techniques of teaching writing. She realised a lack in her professional knowledge which required immediate action from her side to deal with this specific problem. In their study about teachers' stress and burnout Howard and Johnson (2004) shared the same understanding with other researchers (Dworkin, Saha, & Hill, 2003; Kyriacou, 2001) who stated the lack of professional knowledge as a source of teachers' stress and highlighted the important role which institutions' management could play in supporting teachers' ability to overcome similar challenges. Dworkin and others named two different techniques for teachers to develop their professional knowledge which were *direct actions* and *palliative techniques*. Howard and Johnson (2004) noted that enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and being competent came as one of the issues that required *direct actions* (p. 401). Similarly, Mary reported her need to take immediate actions to enhance her abilities in planning and executing lessons, creating assessment tasks, and teaching towards NZQA unit standards. However, she was challenged by the lack of institutional support.

In Mary's story, she was teaching for eleven years in her home country with minimal issues before coming to Christchurch. She reported that most of these issues were only provoked by her being a teacher in this particular PTE, as she felt she lived under the pressure of gaining knowledge to meet its standards. Coping with change can create contextual challenges for ESOL teachers when there is a mismatch between institutional requirements and teachers' individual capacity (Bowen, 2016; Doney, 2013; Mousavi, 2007; Rizqi, 2017). Mary reported the impact of working in a different teaching context and highlighted the tensions brought to her professional practice by the discrepancies between her individual capacity and institutional values; especially when she was challenged by the private market requirements. Walker (2014) discussed the dual nature of private ESOL institutions which seek to achieve profit for their shareholders while trying to establish professional and ethical standards, and stated that teachers in this environment might be exposed to stress caused by this commercial environment. This resonates with what Mary reported about work conditions in PTEs, as she

was challenged by the surrounding commercialised work context and this affected her ability to keep good pacing of updating her professional knowledge.

Mary also talked repeatedly about her sense of being powerless, vulnerable and frustrated because of the institution's policies and the surrounding teaching context. These influences included students' complaints, inefficient management, and absence of teacher supportive policies. Talking about her PLD practices, one of the longest anecdotes in Mary's story discussed a group of students' complaints about her classes. She reported that in PTEs students were treated differently compared to government schools, and her experience with students' complaints was very demotivating. Students were treated by the management as if they were always right, and this put great pressure on her. Consequently, she felt unsafe and frustrated when students complained about her teaching just because they were emotionally attached to their previous teacher. Although she stated that she could not be any other teacher but herself, she was forced by the management to act differently, and negotiate identities to achieve students' satisfaction. The management mainly blamed her for students' dissatisfaction and forced her to change her teaching techniques to meet students' expectations. She also reported that she did not receive any professional guidance on how to change her teaching practices, but a warning of being fired unless students' complaints have not stopped.

As a result, she felt powerless and she had to do what students wanted so as to keep her job. At this time, she felt vulnerable, as she really needed the job; she could not do anything but blindly follow students' wants, not necessarily their actual needs, to keep the class running and keep her job. She reported that her learning about teaching at this particular time was minimised because of work constraints. Mary talked about the varied views of ESOL teaching, reporting that while she was concerned about students' learning and academic progress, institution management were only focusing on increasing the student numbers and maximising the revenue.

When teachers' decision making is paralysed by external factors, professional learning can hardly happen in a context that is neither safe nor comfortable for them. Mary's story added evidence to the study that examined ESOL teachers in the United States of America by Miller and Gkonou (2018) who highlighted the connection between *emotion labour* and how it can affect teachers' practices. They argued that these constraints, while not comfortable, can be helpful for teachers to understand tensions between discourses, and can be an ethical way to develop as teachers (p. 9). Mary's case also concurs with a study conducted in the post-school

sector in New Zealand that revealed the gap between the voices of staff and higher management in relation to their motive and directives (Sedgwick & Grey, 2018). Since these tensions seem inevitable, teachers might need to learn how to challenge and professionally interact with internal and external influences to achieve their goal of being an effective teacher through processes such as fostering resilience and agency.

In conclusion, Mary's story presented both internal and external influences which restrained her professional learning opportunities and affected her professional practices inside and outside the classroom. These internal and external influences interacted with and mediated Mary's teaching life and practices, and mirrored the arguments of scholars (Gu & Day, 2013; Howard & Johnson, 2004) who investigated teachers' in-service practices on a wider basis and tied both internal and external influences, such as teachers' sense of their own effectiveness and working conditions, to their actual professional practices.

Private training establishments as businesses

Mary's story also presented a description of teachers' work conditions in PTEs. On a personal level, it was difficult to get Mary to dedicate time for the three interviews, as she had to do two of them after work hours. Actually, it was not only lack of time that stood between Mary and telling her story; it took her a while to talk openly about her views of private ESOL teaching as a commodity. I needed to build bridges of trust with her before she was able to share her work life experiences. In private businesses, one's views about business owners or higher management, when shared with the wrong people, can be a reason for losing their job.

In Mary's story, PTEs as private enterprises were driven by business values and income generation. She noted that PTEs' management gave the highest priority to students' satisfaction over other aspects of educational principles. She also highlighted the dominance of top-down decision making policies which resulted in a lack of professional support for teachers and bureaucratic inertia at the workplace. Mary's ideas about ESOL teaching as business added evidence to a number of studies (Kauppinen, 2014; Rodan, 2016; Rowe-Williams, 2018; Walker, 2011b, 2014) which highlighted the growth of private education, noted its neoliberal transformation, and agreed that it has acquired features of businesses. Mary's narrative repeatedly discussed three challenges which she faced while teaching ESOL in PTEs. These challenges were students as customers, top-down decision making, and managerial inertia.

Students as customers

Reporting on her experience when she operated under the pressure of students' complaints, Mary said that the institution's management dealt with students as if they were always right. She was trying to refer to the common business concept which says "customers are always right". While arguing that she did her best to improve students' learning experiences regardless of how much money she earned, she said that the institution's management adopted a different attitude towards students' demands. She said that her manager focused more on revenue and student retention. This obvious tension between business values and educational principles was in the centre of several empirical studies which investigated how business values negatively affected teaching practices (Sedgwick & Grey, 2018; Walker, 2000, 2005).

Mary also reported that treating students as customers and teaching as a service were among the weaknesses of PTEs. Her rejection of the idea of treating ESOL teaching as a service where students were treated as paying clients stemmed from her concerns about levels of teacher professionalism under the pressure of revenue maximising. Essential elements of ESOL teaching were affected by viewing students as customers such as teaching quality and teachers' agency. Mary's ideas resonated with Ruth, the researcher, (2018) who highlighted the importance of taking economic values out of education (p. 203).

Mary could not ignore the fact that the PTE where she worked was mainly money-driven. She repeatedly stated the fact that owners and managers of this PTE were much more concerned about students' retention and business flow while she cared for students' learning and academic progress. Walker (2007) in his work to understand the service climate of PETs in New Zealand, argued that PTEs followed a commercial model of management, offering a service package which might go beyond teaching to include housing and entertainment aspects. Some relevant studies (Stachowski, 2008; Walker, 2013) reported that some ESOL in-service teachers comfortably accepted the fact that students are paying clients who should receive proper professional services in return. Nevertheless, Mary's story presented a different view of the argument of being responsive to students' needs in a more reflective and practically-informed manner. She reported that she used to question students' motives, and needs before changing her classroom practices. She also suggested that PTEs' management boards and ownership policies should include ESOL practitioners, so decision making may consider professional aspects of ESOL teaching next to business requirements. Mary stressed the importance of hearing and valuing teachers' voices, as they gained a range of theoretical knowledge which should qualify them to guide students' learning efficiently.

Top-down decision making

Mary reported that her professional practice in private ESOL teaching was mainly coloured and coated with decisions coming from the higher management or owners. She always felt that her hands were tied and she was powerless facing these decisions made by people who, according to Mary, were either less efficient or not ESOL oriented. She noted that her manager was a business graduate who taught at a university and rarely had a chance to teach in private post-school institutions and never taught ESOL. She said that it was not helpful at all to get instructions on how to deal with regular classroom issues from someone who did not know much about actual ESOL classroom dynamics. In her experience, Mary was officially threatened to lose her job due to ill-informed higher management decisions.

The nature of decision making in PTEs in Mary's story shows the negative impact of top-down decision making on teachers' PLD practices. Mary reported that there were times when her professional practice was affected by forcing unexplained change into her classroom practices by higher management. Mary reported that it was her habit to resist change unless it was initiated by her. When others forced her to follow a specific change, she just went back to her classroom, closed the classroom door and taught according to her original beliefs. This huge gap between higher management and teachers' perceptions of ESOL teaching identified in Mary's narrative was also noted as one characteristic of post-school education rooted in a market model (Sedgwick & Grey, 2018). Sedgwick & Grey (2018) also noted that teachers' voices in private organisations were scarcely valued (p. 133).

Managerial inertia: Empowered teachers are potential leavers

A third aspect of PTEs work life which has emerged from Mary's narrative was the lack of professional support to teachers. She stated that higher management adopted a condescending attitude which stopped her from developing professionally. She said that once she wanted to start one of the most prestigious ESOL postgraduate diplomas called DELTA, but she needed the institution's support to enrol. The institution's management and owner refused to support her with her application, and she felt frustrated. She felt that they did not feel comfortable empowering her, as she might get a better job offer in a better institution after completing this postgraduate diploma.

She also noted that she asked her manager to arrange a number of in-house PLD sessions for all teachers, and her suggestion was rejected due to the cost of teacher training. Mary's narrative implied that while management put financial matters on the top of their priorities, she

thought that spending money on teachers' PLD could enhance the quality of teaching and consequently students' retention. However, the institution's management would not implement her suggestions. Consequently, Mary reported that she was demotivated to get engaged in any type of teacher development because of the attitude of the institution's management towards teachers' PLD.

There is a possibility that her manager and institution owners did not support her decision to start this course, as this would take much of her teaching time and brings pressure on other staff members or on the institution as a whole. This strongly resonates with Leontiev's (2012) ideas about how social reality might differ from an individual to another based on their predetermined goals, especially when tackling a socially mediated activity such as teachers' professional practice in private education. Therefore, it might be reasonable to argue that Mary, as an individual teacher, was not able to identify the institutional needs while her manager could, as her manager has had more unrestricted access to information compared to hers. Although the idea of institutional needs seemed appealing, teacher professional learning should be prioritised as there is no doubt that teachers' learning is directly connected to their professional practices and consequently to students' academic achievement.

To sum it up, Mary's story revealed some of the tensions surrounding the business-driven characteristics of ESOL teaching in Christchurch which had an impact on her professional choices and decisions. Mary's story presented other themes such as the role internet and talking to colleagues played in shaping her professional practice. She stated that she was selective and critical when it comes to applying techniques she learned from different websites to her actual classroom practices. In addition to the internet, she also talked to colleagues about teaching challenges and tried various techniques to deal with them. Similarly, she chose teachers with whom she can talk to on the basis of trust. These two themes are discussed in less detail in Mary's story, as they are discussed in more detail in other stories, such as Sensei's, Ruth's, Emily's and Paula Silva's narratives.

Chapter Six: Sensei the Magpie Teacher

Pulling Ideas from all over effectively

If you think you've stopped learning as a teacher. Then, you need to walk out the door

(Sensei, 2019)

Meeting Sensei

When I first met Sensei, we worked for the same PTE in Christchurch. I had back-to-back classes which left me no time to socialise or join teachers' talk. In addition, I was waiting for the University of Canterbury ethical committee's approval which was required prior to recruiting participants. Although I did not get a chance to talk to her, I saw Sensei socialising and talking to teachers about teaching and students' learning several times. She had a natural and spontaneous way of commenting on her professional practices and commenting on other teachers' challenges. She spoke fast, and loved to laugh and share stories with other teachers. She backed up her ideas strongly with logic and evidence from her past experiences. She appeared to be a determined person who believed much in herself and her professional knowledge.

As soon as I obtained ethical approval from the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury, I contacted institution managers and asked them to nominate teachers. Sensei was among the nominated teachers to participate in my study. Prior to the nomination by the institution's manager, I had a few chances to talk to her about teaching and students' learning. Our informal discussion supported my choice of Sensei as an experienced teacher who was always keen to learn and develop professionally in a continuous manner.

Coincidentally, I worked with Sensei in another PTE in Christchurch, and I had the chance to talk to her about my study in the second ESOL institution. In the second institution, we were less overwhelmed with teaching duties and lesson preparation. The number of students was less, and the institution was smaller. This gave us more opportunities to talk and reflect on our teaching experiences and learning activities. Sensei's experience is unique among all participants as she had the chance to work for two different institutions in Christchurch during the period of data collection for this research study.

After we had several discussions about teachers' professional practice, I asked her to participate in my study. She showed interest in the topic and eagerness to read the outcome of the study. As I did with all participants, I agreed to email her a copy of her narrative to make sure that

she feels comfortable with the way I represented her stories and learning experiences. She signed the consent and information sheets. Then she agreed to attend three interviews over a period of three to nine months. It took us around nine months to finish all the interviews. It was not always possible to reach her through emails or text messages. There was a time when I did not hear from her, especially when both of us worked as part-time teachers in these two PTEs, and had different working hours. When we had the chance to meet in one of the institutions, we agreed to have the first interview. We had the interview before one of her classes, and we finished right before her supervisor came to call her for the following class. It took us about five months until we met again at work. We agreed to meet for the second interview, and she chose to meet in one of the PTEs where we could find a quiet place to have the interview. Then, after two months we met again in the same institution and agreed to have the third interview.

The magpie teacher

Sensei is an experienced teacher, and well informed about ESOL and private training establishments. She has over 20 years of experience, and has taught in Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. She stated:

I had all levels from beginners to advanced levels; exam classes, holiday courses, high school students as well. I have had all the variety. Everything! You name it, I have done it.

She explained that she had a certificate in teaching English to adults (CELTA), a diploma in education from a teachers' college in New Zealand, and a postgraduate diploma in teaching. In addition to that, she is a qualified secondary school teacher. She asserted:

ESOL-wise, I did CELTA and that was quite a while ago. I have gone on to the other post graduate qualification, I have done a diploma in education.

Based on her twenty years of experience in education, Sensei shared many stories about her professional practice. Throughout the three interviews, she was able to reflect on a long time of being an in-service ESOL teacher. She noted that she was a curious person who loved to read about the world. She continued by saying that whenever she wanted to understand something, she used to collect information from different resources to enhance her professional knowledge. She called herself a magpie teacher in relation to her pathways to professional learning. She said:

Being a teacher is lifelong learning, and you are always picking up new ways to learn; I like doing that, so I can be a magpie.

Sensei also noted that constant learning, questioning her own practices, looking at research studies, and comparing these to actual teaching practices were among the characteristics of her understanding of the magpie teacher. She explained:

There is one time when I did the CELTA course, the tutor said on the first day “Ok. The minute you think you know everything about teaching, there is the door, walk out”. I always remember that, and how right he was or how right he is! I think you can never stop learning as a teacher, and you are always a magpie. Learning keeps you energised, keeps you young. If you think you’ve stopped learning as a teacher, then you do need to walk out the door.

Cultural awareness

Sensei reported that students need to be dealt with individually. She was continuously keen to find ways to help each and every student separately. She reflected on her understanding of students’ individual needs when she said:

Each student is an individual; one student who may be struggling is not going to have the same issues that another student who is struggling has. It’s all very different, so as a teacher you will constantly be learning about how to help that particular student, and how to help that particular personality.

According to Sensei, to understand individual differences among students, she needed to understand their culture. She claimed that learning is a cultural activity. For Example, in Japan, she chose to ask students about their culture and learned from the Japanese television programmes about their social life. She noted that she transferred this habit to her teaching in PTEs in Christchurch. She also noted that learning about students’ culture allowed her to relate their learning to their real life; she used topics and material that were related to their culture in her classroom. She explained:

I started in Japan and learned so much from watching TV. I can go to my students in the classroom and then kind of relate that. Ah, this actor is doing

that, and so I make it relevant for them, and bringing realia that they can relate to.

Merging into students' culture allowed her to predict their behaviours inside the classroom, she said. For example, she knew that it was part of the students' culture not to easily say that they do not understand, and that changed her classroom practices to check their understanding differently. She explained:

Culturally, it is impolite to say 'I cannot do this, or I can't understand.' I knew this, because I lived there for years. They're not going to say to you things like 'I don't understand'; this is not in their language.

She also shared a story about a group of young learner students when she decided to change the content of the course book that talked about bankruptcy, as it would not meet their learning needs. When I asked her how she came to know this, she said that was based on her awareness of students' culture and background knowledge. Then I asked her why she decided to do this change in the teaching material, she said:

The students are fourteen-year-old girls. That was basic, fourteen-year-old girls in New Zealand would not be discussing these things, because it is not in their knowledge, yet. It is not in their life experience, it will be hard, and you will have to teach within their life experience to engage them and to give them the confidence to do that.

She concluded that it was her awareness of different cultural backgrounds which guided her decisions in relation to course material adaptation or her professional practice.

Being curious

On many occasions, Sensei said that she preferred to be continuously engaged in learning activities. When I asked her about the reasons behind adopting this attitude towards learning, she noted that she liked to gain knowledge and learn about the world. She also said that her professional learning was always driven by her curiosity, and she needed to understand what it takes to be a learning teacher, so she could pass this to her students to support their learning. She said:

Because I am a reader, for me individually, I am a visual learner, I am a curious person. I like to gain knowledge, I like to learn about the world, and it is just something that interests me individually. Because I understand

the way that I learn. And if I understand it, then I can communicate it. Yeah, it will come entirely from me, and If I do not understand how to do it. Then, how can students understand how to do it?

Being flexible and adaptable

Sensei shared many stories with me when she decided to be open to change in response to the teaching context, as she was always open to others' ideas and suggestions. When I asked her about the change in her teaching style, she stated that her learning needs were always changing, very flexible, and very adaptable depending on the teaching requirements, teaching courses, students' needs, students' age, and her own age. She stated:

My teaching style was very different, it evolved over the years and it's an age thing, as well. I think. I was a different teacher in the classroom with the young learner group that I would have been a while ago. You say if I was twenty, and you know what I mean. That is an adaption as well, because I am not going to be the same person.

Talking about the nature of her learning and how flexible she was, she said that her professional learning was maximised because of her attitude of flexibility towards it. She added that she always learned as she went, but not spontaneously. She was always doing a lot of prediction and reflection, she noted. However, much learning happened on the spot, as she was able to predict shifts as well as changes in her teaching plans, she said. She also noted that this type of learning might seem simple but it was always complicated. She went on and said:

When I was planning [lessons], I made it quite flexible to myself going on. We will not stick rigorously to this plan, because in those situations, you can't, you've got to be very adaptable. Then, you learn! Basically, I learned as I went, but it was not, it was not spontaneous. It was not all like going and making something up on the spot. It may seem like that but it is very difficult to do so. I knew it was going to happen like that, and it is a good thing.

Continuing talking about flexibility, she shared a story with me about the time when she made a decision to teach a group of young learners after a long time of being engaged with adult learners only. Although she had experience with young learners, she realised that it was a long time since she last had taught young learner classes. Trying to reflect on this situation, she said that she felt she was a different teacher. It was a case of her age and the changing environment

around her. Therefore, she decided to revisit her teaching techniques, question them, and get engaged in reflection and adaptation. She added that she would not change the content of the course, but she changed her approach towards its activities. She noted:

It's been a while since I have addressed the young learners. It's exactly a different time so how am I going to adapt it in order to teach? How is that going to work? With the activities planned, I felt the activities will not change that much just my approach to them and my approach to classroom management. There is a lot of prediction going on there and that was a good thing. I thought what happened there, what worked, how did that go? So it is a good thing, you always go through the two things; reflection and prediction. I will predict what is going to happen next time, and reflect on how I did it then, and take it to the next class.

She also stated that she reflected on her classroom practices and questioned her teaching methodology continuously. When I asked her why she insisted on changing her professional practices, although they were tried and proven successful in her past experience, she replied:

Generations constantly changing, so let us say, if I taught young learners ten years ago, or even six years ago, you would do certain things with them, but it has changed now because it is new technology and these generations. Also, I am more mature. I am more mature than when I first started teaching young learners and I cannot be the same with them that is very different with me now, and for me then.

When I asked her about how she kept a record of this change in her professional practices, she told me another example of reflection and flexibility. She claimed that she always wrote notes for herself, a list of things to be done in the following class. She explained:

Yes, I have a piece of paper near to write notes; I make notes to myself on a notebook or a piece of paper. I write memos or do ticks or anything like that. I leave notes to myself, written down in just bullet points, in a language that I can understand.

After that, she referred again to the story of her experience with the teenage group of students for whose level the planned teaching material did not work. The textbook was far too hard for the students. It was far too mature for them, and suited an adult learners group rather than teenagers. Therefore, she picked the main grammar points and started teaching them on

different topics. She made a decision to leave the textbook aside and designed a teaching material that suited the students more. She suggested:

Everything was geared towards an adult life experience. So what did I do?
I saw some of the grammar points in that unit and then we can just make up some questions so that I can teach them the basic structures. So we made it more activity-based work. We decided to put the textbook aside because it was very clear it will not work.

She changed the whole classroom material to suit her students' level, match their knowledge about the world, and meet their learning interests. She came up with more real-life-matching learning activities, she stated. Asking her about how she made this decision, she said that this came after she talked with other teachers in the place, and they had similar views of the prescribed teaching material. She also confirmed that this attitude towards learning changed her classroom teaching for the better.

Awareness of internal change

In one of our interviews, Sensei said that she realised that she was more experienced compared to her early days as a teacher. However, she stated that she was still in need of relearning and updating herself on the latest teaching philosophy and techniques. She found it strange to remain attached to the same teaching style, and she felt she should search for new teaching techniques that suit her age, her maturity level, and her students as well. She had to change her teaching style with young learners as she said that she had changed and generations of students had also changed. She concluded that she would have to adapt in response to her position, age and needs. She said:

Things have changed now, because it is technology and this generation has changed, too. We have to relearn this ourselves.

She talked again about teacher professional learning saying that it should be continuous, as what was going on in the world fifteen years ago, when she was a novice teacher, was different. The teaching methodology was totally different. For example, teachers were taught to do drilling which has become outdated in many classroom practices. In addition, students were changing and so was the world around them. As a teacher, she has been getting more mature and some old teaching techniques were not suitable to her current teaching philosophy. Therefore, she always wanted to keep herself updated about modern teaching techniques and strategies by attending formal PLD or informal learning activities. She related:

Probably before I started teaching, there was the drill response and that was so American “I am going to the shop. I am going to the shop. Repeat after me” total physical response, and honestly that's updated now you won't be doing this in 2019, unless you are doing a total beginner class.

Utilising self-awareness

Sensei suggested that there were some aspects of students' education, such as individualised learning, that she can apply to teacher professional learning. She also stated that teachers might vary in their learning preferences. She continued by saying that they have varied intelligence simply as their brains work differently. When I asked her about how different her learning could be compared to other teachers, she confirmed that she argued that there was no absolute superiority for one learning option over the others, as teachers can learn through adopting a wide range of approaches. She noted:

It would be very similar to some, different to others. I mean I think I do not really know specifically. If somebody is good at math, they still have another approach to learning, because of the way their brain works. Whereas, I will go from another approach. They are all good; there are no right and wrong answers to how you learn.

When I asked her how she chose the suitable learning style, she referred to the impact of work context and specific challenges she faced which should not necessarily be similar to other teachers' work circumstances. She argued that the teaching lives of ESOL teachers in the same institutions were different, and so their professional practice reflected their individual beliefs. She asserted:

It is just what works for my particular problem, and somebody else's might be different.

Sensei talked about her flexibility and adaptability quite often, and she referred to her learning preference of “relearn this ourselves; on our own”. She noted that her professional learning was a personalised activity which always came as a response to her understanding of the surrounding workplace conditions. She stated:

It is something that will come entirely from me. It is just what I like to do, I like to gain knowledge. I like to learn about the world and it is just

something that interests me individually, others will have other ways. This is the way I can absorb information.

When I asked her how she evaluated the impact of professional learning on her practices, she stated that she practiced self-evaluation. When I asked her why she chose to stick to self-evaluation, she said that teachers might have different opinions about the same classroom issue. Thus, she chose to evaluate her work on her own. She added that she firmly believed that she had control over her needs and could perform self-evaluation successfully and make decisions about her professional practice.

I asked her to explain why she preferred self-evaluation while other teachers might like to have another teacher or an academic supervisor to evaluate their performance. She stated that in her experience when another teacher observes her classroom, this makes it not a real class, and she would not be herself. She concluded that in her experience, observed classes were just artificial teaching environments which often made her feel uncomfortable. She said:

It is always artificial; you are not yourself when you have someone there.

I do not think this is very helpful to any teacher. So, I think you should try it yourself.

I asked her whether she had had another teacher to observe her class in the past six months; she asserted that she was not completely against the idea of observations. She noted that she can talk to colleagues or academic managers about her professional practices, ask for their advice, and learn from their experience. However, she confirmed that she preferred to have personalised professional learning pathways, and only talked to colleagues when she felt the necessity to do so. She confirmed:

I mean I can call on someone if I wanted that.

Using the internet

Throughout the three interviews, we talked about Sensei's professional practices, and what professional learning pathways she adopted in response to the work context. One of the PLD pathways that she talked about quite often was going online and learning from the internet. Asking her how often she went online to learn about teaching, she said:

All the time, as much as I can.

Trying to explain why she chose to go online, she noted that these websites had a lot of ideas which she learned from and managed to change her teaching practices to meet students' needs.

When I asked her whether she took online knowledge for granted, she noted that she used to question every piece of information she learned online. Therefore, she usually adapted and changed what she found online to suit her actual classroom practices. When I asked her why she chose the internet to learn about teaching techniques, she argued that online learning resources were updated and used to deal with current teaching. When I asked her whether the internet facilitated her professional learning, she answered with confidence that the internet was one of the most important learning pathways in her learning about teaching. She said that the internet facilitated her learning about educational technologies. She said:

I go through the websites that really cater to specific topics. There is a lot of good ideas, and especially when you go to the forums and you have other teachers sharing about whether this worked, and this didn't work. So that was awesome. As I said I look at the forums; I look at the resources. That is something I have used before! I can adapt this myself, you would have to adapt, depending on students' needs.

Sensei continued by saying that once she used a documentary series *People Who Made an Impact* in one of her classrooms. Then, she decided to play the transcripts to allow students to figure out the pronunciation of some words. She said that she also used the same activity as a gap filling activity. She commented:

Students would say the teacher uses good resources and technology and doesn't use the book all the time.

In the third interview, I asked her to comment again on using the internet as a learning tool, she said that she chose the internet as it was an open access learning resource, and she did not have to buy resources. However, she thought she should be careful not to get lost among the variety it offered. She confirmed:

It's free you don't buy any resources. I just go for the free ones, but I tend not to spend all day on it; it is a waste of time. I tend just to go to a simple page. I know that website, so I will just go and grab a few things. Then go through it; I can actually do that. This is great but I am not spending much time on it.

Then she shared the story of a higher level class when she searched online for a ten minute video or a TED Talk that matched the topic of that week for her class. Then, she tailored activities for the class that were useful for her high level students. The students were happy

learning from real life material, she reported. She noted that this was another occasion when the internet facilitated her learning about teaching and enhanced her teaching practices.

She continued talking about this experience and said that going online and learning was a totally independent activity, and it was an individual conscious decision to get engaged with these online teaching materials. She also noted that she not only learned online, but evaluated the outcome of this learning after using it in the classroom. When I asked her how she learned to do this, she noted that it was her past experience and the necessity to adopt preassigned teaching materials. In other words, she knew from her past experiences that she would find learning pathways online for herself and her students, as she had accumulated experiences of finding and selecting good learning resources online. She noted:

You have to relearn this yourself. So I went online and saw what people were doing there. What is available to me? What is the latest philosophy that I can take? And how can I relate to that? I am a more mature teacher now.

When I asked her about how the use of online materials affected her classroom practices, she said that her students showed interest in the videos as they were authentic and up-to-date. On a different level, she said that her self-confidence was better after this lesson, as the students appreciated that she used good resources and technology in the classroom. She asserted:

It's relevant to the topic that I am teaching. It's not some old thing from ten years ago in a textbook. Especially if you've got adult students that are mature and intelligent. You know, and we have a lot of students who work in business and they appreciate that. They do not want to be there looking for a textbook every day. We know this grammar but this is something we really need.

Informal discussions with colleagues

Sensei also mentioned learning from informal discussions with colleagues as one of the effective PLD pathways which shaped and reshaped her professional practice. When I asked her about what she usually does to face unexpected classroom challenges, she referred to the role which colleagues played in her daily teaching practices. She noted:

We talk with colleagues. Maybe there is another teacher in the class (co-teacher), and even if there is not another teacher in the class; I talk to the

people that doing the same course as you are. Nine times out of ten you have something similar going on to talk about and share. Of course, everyone learns from each other.

She said that she liked teachers' talk as teachers asked questions, and they were willing to learn and share ideas. They were supportive, and respected her ideas. Teachers' talk secured a collaborative learning environment for her professional learning and boosted her sense of confidence. She said:

You actually get to know who is keen to learn. You actually see who is asking questions, who is talking to you and other persons, who is sharing ideas, who has been supportive, who wants to have other ideas. If you find this, you find teachers who are open up about this. So, let us get our heads together, let us do this, you go try it. Oh, yes, this is working, I feel more confident about this.

Sensei repeatedly affirmed that she learned from other teachers and often embraced their ideas. She observed how other teachers operate, and adopted techniques which suited her beliefs. She affirmed:

I learn from the way they culturally approach something. Say, they might do an activity and they adapt it in a different way. I think, "Oh, this is a good thing. I will use that, too." So you always learn new ideas.

This interaction with teachers improved her teaching practices to become more communicative. When I asked her how being engaged with other teachers' professional practice affected her actual teaching practices, she added:

Just more communicative really, just using communication more, and using more worksheets. People can get their heads together and do work together.

When I asked her about how safe it is to talk to other teachers about her lack of professional knowledge and need of learning, she said that she felt very safe to talk to other teachers about her learning needs under specific circumstances. She said that she chose people who share the same interests with her to talk to them about students' issues. When I asked her about the type of teaching challenges she might not share with other teachers, she said that she was very open, as she talked about all teaching issues to other teachers. She said:

I mean you pick your people if you get to talk to people and you get to know your sharing ideas or things. I work together with two specific people here, and we, the three of us, share ideas all the time. That is just three of us who are doing the same course, we know what each other doing or talking about.

When I asked her about the key aspects which she thought were necessary to create strong professional relationships with colleagues at work, she seemed not sure at first. Then, she commented that she was always open to varieties and was also honest. Being open and honest was really important in building relationships with other teachers and learning from them. In her talks about building trust among colleagues, she also referred to the role which the work context played in this regard. She noted that some institutions' managerial systems were built up to make teachers feel comfortable and encourage them to learn. She has established criteria to identify productive work contexts for teachers. She noted:

I think being honest, being open. To be honest I think. Probably it varies from school to school. You really know where it is a great place that has been built up to feel comfortable and share, and that where all the great learning happens. That is where you improve as a person and as a teacher.

She also said that this institutional quality of fostering collegiality differs from one PTE to another. She said that there are places which cater for a healthy working environment while there are others that fail to maintain one. She also said that these institutional practices could negatively affect teaching practices and PLD. She explained:

The atmosphere is really tense, really down, you know, everyone knows that. You would not talk to anyone, you would just do your bet and go out. You would not share! I do not know people working there, because you do not know, you do not have a trust, and nobody trusts each other. That is not a good way to work, not a good way to be.

To Sensei, talking to other teachers was not only to seek their advice, but on many occasions she talked to other teachers about their teaching practices and gave them advice. She reported that in her way towards improving her teaching practices, she was able to guide other teachers' learning as well. She said that, as an experienced IELTS teacher, she used to advise novice teachers about teaching IELTS preparation classes. Therefore, talking to colleagues, however

informally, facilitated Sensei's professional practice and allowed her to help other teachers as well. She reported:

I have taught IELTS for a while. So I have a lot of knowledge about what resources to use. So I like to share that knowledge, I can help. I can help you mark writing. What is the band score? I can give you more stuff, we can do that.

Students' talk and culture:

She reported that her professional practice was affected by creating a comfortable atmosphere for students to ask questions inside and outside the classroom. She stated that interacting with students created learning opportunities for students as well as herself. She noted:

To me, personally, I like this, I want to create that environments with students feel relaxed and comfortable to ask questions, because it is learning for me and learning for them, too.

In her experience, an engagement with students' questions and needs was practising PLD. She also noted that she learned from students' discussions more than learning from books, and so did her students. In addition, talking to students, in her view, meant engaging with their culture and becoming more aware of their professional needs and cultural backgrounds. She was always keen on understanding students' culture as a learning pathway towards better classroom practices. She said:

I like to explore their culture. I ask them questions, and the more I get to learn about them as individuals, the more I can understand where they come from. Every culture is different and I am just interested in that. In terms of what engages me, as I said, I will read and watch films.

Past teaching experience

Sensei reported that she has been in the field for more than twenty years, and she had acquired skills dealing with teaching issues. She shared a story with me about when she changed her classroom teaching material because she thought that the topic, bankruptcy and divorce rates, would neither suit students' age nor background knowledge. When I asked her how she learned about taking such a decision or who taught her to do that, she confidently referred to her long experience as an ESOL teacher, and her awareness of her students' backgrounds. She stated:

I had an advantage. I knew immediately through my experience. Fourteen years old girls in New Zealand would not be discussing these things.

She continued confirming the role past experience played in enhancing her ability to not only change teaching materials successfully, but find proper teaching resources and adapt them when needed. She noted:

So that was awesome. I mean if you have been teaching for a while you know that this resource might be old, you can change it. That is what I was doing, I am trying to keep current and keep up to date.

Another element of Sensei's past experience was trial and error to examine new ideas. She noted that a big part of her professional practice was guided by old successful experiences. She stated:

Trial and error really and experience. We tried this before. And it is like what works and what the institution or the school says?

Throughout Sensei's story, she implied that being an experienced teacher was an advantage. Her past practices informed her professional practices. She said:

For me, with my experience, the more years you have been teaching, you can actually pick up the signs. You look for these signs very quickly.

Leading change: Taking the initiative

On many occasions, Sensei talked about taking charge of her professional practice. She shared stories with me about times when she took the initiative to start learning towards becoming a certified Cambridge examiner. It was her conscious decision to start this formal learning and certification journey. She explained:

I said I wanted to train as a Cambridge examiner, and there was a course of two afternoons a week. It was me taking the initiative; I wanted to qualify as a Cambridge examiner.

Another time when we were talking about learning from other teachers, she said that she learned a lot from other teachers' talk. However, she used to question everything before applying ideas in her classroom. She also said that she would not invite another teacher to observe her experimenting with something new unless she had evaluated it beforehand. Thus,

she always wanted to have the first initiative and take the lead in relation to getting engaged in PLD activities. She noted:

I will do it first, and then if I was excited about it, I will ask someone to come.

When I asked her why she thought it was better for her to sometimes work individually, she claimed that teachers should take the initiative and lead their professional practices. She argued that teachers as leaders should not be told what to do. They are supposed to know about the nature of their work more than anybody else. She stated:

You've got to take the initiative. You have got to decide what you want to do, and what interests you. I mean a teacher should take the initiative. You shouldn't be told what to do; you're telling other people what to do. I mean taking the example of me going to do the graduate diploma in teaching or me doing the Cambridge examiner course, I was not told to do this I decided to do them, it was the initiative from my side.

She also added that she always dealt with challenges individually. After that, she decided to review relevant research or ask colleagues to confirm her findings about these challenges. She said:

You should do it yourself first, and then if you want another opinion or an expert opinion, I mean I can call on someone, if I wanted that. Say, I have been working on this, and I found this out. I have learned this. Can you come in and see if I have done it right?

She also said that it was her habit to lead her own learning activities, and she did this “as much as possible”. However, she noted that change in her professional practices was also connected to the surrounding teaching environment. She continued saying that some workplaces encouraged a change in her professional practices by creating a healthy work environment while other places left her no option but to take the lead and manage it. She had to become self-sufficient due to a lack of support from the institution. She stated:

All the time, as much as possible, I mean when you are in an environment where you can do that, you tend to do it all the time. Of course, it depends on where you are? You'll have to be more self-sufficient in another environment, which is fine too. But when you have that chance, when you

do have that environment, here is an example of how you will be collaborative.

In the third interview, she gave further comments on taking charge of change in her practices. She noted that sometimes she took control of her professional practices as a response to a less productive and unprofessional work atmosphere. She shared stories about a time when she was tired, sick and not able to operate professionally because of the workplace's policy and procedures. She noted:

Teachers that have the experience, when they feel frustrated, stressed out anxious, are not giving the hundred percent their best. No matter how experienced or inexperienced they cannot teach to their own standards.

Although it was challenging, Sensei reported that taking charge of her learning had resulted in major changes in relation to classroom practices, career development and her self-confidence. She thought this continuous professional learning and development gave her job security in the time of the market crash which took years to recover from. She also stated that ESOL was not the most stable of industries, and the more teaching knowledge and experience a teacher had and could demonstrate the more ESOL jobs they would potentially get. In addition, she stated that learning built up her self-confidence, as she always experienced being a better teacher after every learning experience. She added:

If it works, and a part of it works. This is not all going to work But I mean your self-confidence is going to really build. It is really a good thing for teachers' confidence. Oh yes, I can do that now, that was really interesting for me to see.

Therefore, the decision to go and learn on her own did not always result from enjoyable learning journeys. Sometimes her attempts to maintain professionalism were provoked by contextualised stressors. When I asked her about experiences of learning on her own she reported that this experience was full of challenges. Although taking control of implementing change in her professional practice was challenging at the beginning, she asserted that the challenging environment increased her cognitive stamina and provoked her sense of resilience. She asserted:

I think this is very character building for teachers, because you get to know yourself better. It can be full of challenges, and you do not know what you are doing. Or if you do it right, or But that is part of the learning

process. You know, you have some hiccups along the way but then at the end, you have learned. Only ups and downs and you need to go through it yourself. Then ... when you have gone through it yourself. Then you can actually help others.

Tale of two PTEs

Sensei, an experienced teacher, was the only participant who worked in two different PTEs during the period of this study. Sometimes, she worked for the two PTEs at the same time. She reported that she reacted differently to the same issue on the same day due to different work contexts. Although the two PTEs were both post school private training institutions, Sensei's work life was significantly different in relation to PLD activities. Sensei's PLD was mediated by three interrelated workplace aspects which are students' satisfaction, teachers' practices and ESOL management. In our discussions about these two workplaces she referred to the huge gap between these two PTEs although they were located in the same city and guided by New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) standards. She stated:

It is quite surprising how big the gulf is between there and there [the two PTEs]. I am quite surprised the gap is so wide, I am quite surprised that this is the case.

These two PTEs are similar to each other in their being post school private training establishments in New Zealand. They both have a head office in Auckland and a few branches in different cities in New Zealand including Christchurch. Throughout the three interviews, Sensei shared stories and statements about the two PTEs that highlighted similarities and differences between them. The number of students in one institution is much larger compared to the other, though. For the purpose of this narrative, I use pseudonyms to refer to these two PTEs. The first PTE will be referred to as *River*, and the second PTE will be referred to as *Desert*.

When I talked to Sensei about in-service teacher learning and development, she stated that in *Desert* she was not fully enthusiastic to share ideas with other teachers. She did not feel comfortable talking about her learning in this institution. She noted that she was only completing the assigned teaching hours and then leaving the institution. She said:

You would just do your bit and go out; you would not share. I do not know people working there, because you do not know, you do not have trust, and

nobody trusts each other. That is not a good way to work, not a good way to be.

She also noted her learning and development were not supported and encouraged in Desert, and she improved neither on the personal nor on the professional level. Thus, she decided to stop working for this specific PTE. She reflected:

You really know where it is a great place that has been built up to feel comfortable and share, and that is where all the great learning happens.

That is where you improve as a person and as a teacher.

On the other hand, she shared many stories about learning opportunities in River. She claimed that in River she was able to talk to other teachers, ask questions, and learn from one another's experiences. She said that in River, there are a good number of supportive, and cooperative teachers who were open to different topics to talk to and learn from. In River, she said, she was able to be honest, so she was able to build trust and constructive learning discussions with colleagues at work. This trust and willingness to share created this harmony among colleagues in River to the extent that they communicated successfully and developed their own lexicon and professional language. She noted:

For example, I work together on exam classes, one or two specific people here [in River] at the current school, and we, the three of us, share ideas all the time. We talk about things together. I just say, I will give you that, this and that. It is just the three of us who are doing the same course. Then, you develop a second language yourselves, we know what each other are doing or talking about. So we kind of having jargon or a lingo.

Continuing our discussions about her experience in River, she said that her discussions with other teachers were always helpful and she preferred to learn from people and guide their learning. In River, she had the chance to talk to colleagues and learn from them. She noted:

I pretty much talk about everything. People want to learn from me, they do that, too. I mean I really like talking to teachers about their teaching career or stages where they have been and done that. And I really like to have advice too. And if they are willing to talk or ask questions, and I mean here (in River) there are some teachers here that I always talk to.

She also added that working together with other teachers created a positive atmosphere at work which facilitated their PLD and positively affected their professional relationship. In River, the level of effectiveness and professionalism was much higher compared to Desert, she concluded. She reflected:

We work together. Yes absolutely, I felt that everybody, and liked to be part of a team and support each other and that's really important, too. That's what makes the best and the most of us come out; effectiveness.

Students are always right

During our initial discussions about students' satisfaction, Sensei completely agreed that valuing students' satisfaction is a must for every PTE's to succeed. Asking her about who is responsible for making sure that students are satisfied, she said that it is a shared responsibility between the institution management and teachers. She confirmed:

Students' learning is a shared responsibility. Students have to get a lot out of it. Teachers have got to make it exciting for them. Institutions need to know they are making a change in students' lives, not just take their money.

Sensei also shared stories about how she cared about her students' learning and comfortableness in River and Desert alike. She said that she had to change the whole curriculum when she felt that it was irrelevant to her students' needs and she was always keen on setting up the context for them to succeed. She said:

We are not setting them up to fail. We setting them up to succeed, and they are going to succeed in different ways. This way we are going to put them in a class that is more suited to them.

In River, she thought that students were valued and were treated with respect and sympathy. She shared the experience of collaborating with the school management to help a group of misplaced students to pass their courses. She noted that through her discussions with the management which were guided by the school policy, it was possible to help students cope with their learning difficulties without affecting the rest of the class. She stated:

We started by checking what the institution or the school says, what we would do with them, too. We cannot let this affect the base of the class or the other students. We'll need to take these students aside, and talk to them

one-to-one. There is a chance that students can stay. Give them their chance; you have got to give them that chance.

Sensei thought that valuing students is one of the characteristics of successful PTEs. She also added that students can identify PTEs that value them and figure it out when they are not getting enough attention from the teacher or the institution. She also argued that students were always able to recognise places that offered them quality education and left an impact on their personal and linguistic abilities, such as River. She said:

So they know they are making a change in students' lives. Students go away, and say, I had a great time there and I felt valued, not they just took my money, and that is what I felt. You know, this is prevalent, and it can happen, so the best places value the students. Students know when they are not valued, they are not stupid.

Contrarily, she claimed that Desert was totally different in relation to valuing their students, and there was a huge gap between these two PTEs. She asserted:

Throughout this industry, it has been always, the gap has been quite wide. They know, where the students are valued, they also know, immediately, when they are not valued.

She reflected that in Desert students are dealt with as paying clients, and the institution only valued their money while offering very few real learning opportunities to them. She noted:

Some of the students say I didn't learn something new and they just took my money. That is something that the school manager will be reading.

She also said that Desert, a PTE whose attitude towards students was mainly money-driven, was more willing to respond to students' wants rather than students' real academic needs. She also shared a story with me about a time when she had a problem with students in Desert and the school management was unfair, from her point of view, and responded to students' wants rather than being professional and responding to students' actual needs. She made a few comments about this situation during our interviews, and she confirmed:

I will just say that you know it's a good school when they value students' comments and value their staff too. It's not just students. It's not just the customers are always right, it's the stuff as well.

She reported that, although as a teacher she needed to adapt to the institutional and student's needs, she had to teach according to teaching ethics and professional practices. Consequently, she can contribute to students' lives and institutional goals. She said:

As a teacher you need to adapt to the institutional needs and student's needs, teachers need to contribute. When teachers are comfortable they can contribute to the school directives.

However, she said that she decided not to continue working for Desert, as they do not value students or teachers. In Desert, they deal with them as revenue making sources. She noted:

You need to care about your staff members, you need to make sure they're ok. Not just to be selfish for yourself and revenue.

In summing up, the way she accepted change has varied dramatically from one institution to the other. In River, she was open to change, willing to learn and contribute to others' learning. Parallel to this, in Desert, she was resisting change and not willing to be part of the managerial intentionality to the extent that she submitted her resignation letter twice, she said. She also reported that she was neither able to develop professionally or demonstrate her best teaching practices as a result of the tension with the institution system. She recounted:

I'm not talking specifically about myself here, but about teachers that have experienced that. Teachers feel frustrated, stressed out with an anxious feeling they are not giving a hundred percent of their best. No matter how experienced or inexperienced they are, they cannot teach to their own standards. It affects them a lot until we get cynical until they get "I can't do that", till they get "I can't be bothered", "I cannot do this". Then it actually affects their health, they physically get sick because of what is happening. Until they say I cannot do this anymore. It is quite surprising how big the gulf is between there and there.

ESOL as a private industry

The story of Sensei's work life as an ESOL teacher in the private post school sector in Christchurch was complex in many ways. Her experience of teaching in two different PTEs in Christchurch brought a huge number of stories about teaching, administrative and managerial practices in these two places and other institutions as well. We talked much about the nature of

teacher learning in different PTEs and how that affected her own professional learning and development practices.

When I asked her about why these PTEs had different characteristics and teacher learning which seemed different from other tertiary education organisations, she noted that the main reason why PTEs were different was “business”. I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by business in PTEs, she said she noted that ESOL was an industry that in most cases was private, especially when it came to post school education. She added that, in her experience, private industries have their own economic characteristics that turned many institutions into money-driven identities rather than being directed by educational principles and ethics, and this affected teachers’ learning negatively. She suggested that one key characteristic of business-driven environments was that organisations would reduce their expenditure to the minimum so they can maximise their revenue. This indicates her perspective of having minimum academic requirements, so institutions can operate professionally, and she used the term a bottom-line to refer to an academic bottom-line which some institutions were not able to stick to according to her experience. She noted:

We know it is a private industry, and there is a bottom line. Are you going to go beyond the bottom line? Are you going to offer more than that? That is why some schools are successful. They continue to be successful and grow; they have specific standards, they stick to the standards. But others, basically this is the bottom-line, they are money-driven, and that is how it is like.

Management role in facilitating her work life

Discussing the characteristics of a private ESOL teaching environment. Sensei highlighted the PTEs’ management role in facilitating or sometimes hindering her professional learning. She shared the story about her managers supporting her decisions about further training to become a Cambridge examiner by paying for the course and freeing her from teaching during the course period. She recounted:

Some years ago, I said I wanted to train as a Cambridge examiner, and there was a course. It was two afternoons a week. So the institution management discussed the matter and came to me and said “you can record this and we will pay for you. You get paid for this because it's part of your

PD. because it enhances us, too.” So I got that (certification) and it goes on my record of teaching.

On the other hand, she shared other stories when an institution’s management caused great frustration among teachers and hindered their professional learning. She claimed that she suffered from PTEs’ management bureaucracy that prevented her from learning and engaging productively with colleagues at work. Bureaucratic practices were embodied in discouraging learning among teachers and encouraging unhealthy competition among them, she said. She added that some PTE managers feed these practices on purpose to keep the institution under control. To elaborate on management practices’ negative impact on teachers’ learning, she referred to the habit of sharing teaching and learning materials among teachers. She thought that when management was feeding this unhealthy competition spirit among teachers, they would not share or care for each other. Teachers would guard their teaching material to look the best among all colleagues in the institution, she claimed. She reflected:

You are totally in a competition, and I think the management foster that sense of competition, which is wrong. They are feeding it. It’s not “I am, just me personally”, it’s the whole lot of people I knew in the ESOL industry, who would have had that experience, they would say the same thing. That this kind of environment is feeding it deliberately.

When I asked her about the managerial practices’ impact on teachers’ learning and development, she said that teachers were just a reflection of their work environment; they can be good or bad teachers based on the professional learning practices of their management and workplace policies. She also noted that, however difficult, these experiences were necessary for her as a teacher to gain the experience of differentiating between good and bad PTEs. She explained:

You learn what you do not want to do, and you learn what you want to do. That is basically it, you learn what’s good and you learn what’s bad. And I think it’s quite a good experience as an ESOL teacher to experience that. You really know where it is a great place that has been built up to feel comfortable and share, and that where all the great learning happens. That is where you improve as a person and as a teacher, as you know.

Then she continued talking about her experience with bureaucratic constraints. She thought that it was the management’s role to spread the caring and sharing culture, so everybody would

feel comfortable. She elaborated that management should care for teachers' comfort as much as they cared about students', because institutions would not achieve success without making teachers comfortable. She also asserted that managerial practices such as inertia affected teachers, regardless of their experience or inexperience. She said:

It really depends on the school. There are some schools, they don't value the students. The atmosphere is really tense, really down, you know that, everyone knows that, you would not talk to anyone, you would just do your bit and go out. You would not share. I don't know people working there, because you do not know, you do not have trust, and nobody trusts each other. That is not a good way to work, not a good way to be.

Acceptance of institutional directives

In Sensei's account teachers had to accept institutions' pre-determined policies and procedures which, she implied, are moulded in a market-driven model more than educational principles. In this regard, she referred to two types of institutions; one type which was successful and would possibly continue to grow. While others were money-driven where teachers would feel frustrated and could not teach to their best standards. She related:

I am not talking specifically about myself here, but about other teachers that have the experienced. Teachers feel frustrated, stressed out, and anxious. Feeling that they are not giving the hundred percent of their best. No matter how experienced or inexperienced they were, they cannot teach to their own standards. It's very frustrating.

She also suggested that, in response to this *rooted-in-business* environment, ESOL teaching made teachers' hands tied. Sensei shared stories about the decisions she made to resign from teaching because she could not cope with a PTE's requirements. She said that it was beyond her abilities as a teacher: *you can't be a superhero*. She also stated that she felt powerless against institutional directives when she had tensions keeping her professional standards and keeping students satisfied at the same time. Therefore, she was in a critical position to either accept ideas that contradicted her teaching values or simply resign from work. She stated:

You can't do anything; your hands are tied and basically you have to accept that your hands are tied and that's either just keeping on or shipping out.

Key Themes that emerge

After reviewing Sensei's narrative, the following major themes emerged.

Varying characteristics according to ESOL teaching locality

A significant feature of Sensei's story is that she had the opportunity to work in two different PTEs at the same time and during the period of data collection. She reported that she worked as a part-time teacher for both places at the same time. Her stories covered both places and she usually made comparisons between the two places in relation to mediating her teaching practices and PLD activities. In her investigation to understand the connection between teacher identity and their teaching practices Izadinia (2018) brought the work environment to the centre of teacher identity formation, arguing that

Working in a positive environment promotes feelings of security and fosters a sense of belonging and connectedness. On the contrary, environments that are stressful, unpleasant, and unsupportive can cause negative outcomes such as job anxiety, passivity, and loss of interest and motivation to complete activities (p. 117).

Although Sensei worked as a part-timer whose work life could be different from full-time teachers, her messages were consistent and concurred with other full-time participant teachers in both places. The pool of participants in this study included other teachers from the two PTEs who worked in these two workplaces at the same time with Sensei.

Overall, Sensei's narrative presented the two PTEs differently in relation to teachers' lives. She reported that in River she used to talk comfortably with colleagues about her learning issues and teaching practices. In Desert she left the institution immediately after finishing the teaching hours due to a lack of trust among teachers; she rarely talked to colleagues in Desert. She also stated that she suffered from the way management viewed and valued students and teachers in Desert, unlike River where she felt comfortable to guide students' learning and boost her own learning by gaining further qualifications. Not only Sensei reported the tension between teachers' educational values and management market-oriented practices in Desert, but Mary also noted this issue in her story. Simultaneously, other participants, such as Ruth, who worked in River talked about positive aspects such as management support and teachers' PLD atmosphere.

One teacher but multiple identities

In Sensei's anecdotes about PLD and teaching practices in these two PTEs, she noted that she was acting and reacting differently to work issues. This implies different teacher identities in different contexts. Kong (2014) studied one TESOL teacher's identity changes during her PLD pursuit and highlighted the possibility of continuous change and fluctuation in an individual teacher's needs and desires which might result in inconsistency in their performance (p. 82). This perspective did not include the social aspects of teacher identity formation. Many studies (Chen, Horn, & Nolen, 2018; Kaplan & Garner, 2017; Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2018) supported the notion that internal factors along with other external factors shaped the way teachers viewed themselves as practitioners and tied teacher identity formation to their PLD practices. While the role of internal aspects of teacher identity shaping can be noticed in Sensei's story, the aspects of social, geographical and political aspects obviously influenced Sensei's identity shaping as well.

Reviewing Sensei's narrative, it is noteworthy that she referred repeatedly to the professional context as a slice of the broader sociocultural private ESOL teaching context as the main contributor to the process of her teaching identity structuring. Although both PTEs were private post school institutions, Sensei reported that she taught and developed differently in these two places. She noted on many occasions that she acted and reacted to work issues differently to the extent that she behaved like two different teachers. On the one hand, in River, she was a confident teacher whose managers used to trust her with academic matters and invest in her by sponsoring her PLD activities. On the other hand, in Desert students complained about her classes, and she was uncomfortable to the extent that she resigned. In an initial evaluation of this predicament, it is obvious that there are two different teacher identities; one efficient teacher and the other is deficient and both are the creation of the surrounding social, political and geographical factors. This resonates strongly with other studies (Kong, 2014; Liu & Xu, 2013) which viewed teacher identity formation as a social process. Liu and Xu (2013) also claimed that an individual teacher might be given multiple identities by the social complexities and geographic mobility (p. 82).

Sensei's story presents tensions existing in private businesses among various stakeholders. Social influences such as power relationships in workplace had an impact on her sense of her teacher identity, and this was definitely different from one PTE to another. In Desert, she was forced to behave inside the classroom in a specific manner that satisfied students rather than meeting her teaching values and principles, she reported. Research presented different

perspectives of this tension and its impact on teachers. While some literature (Tsui, 2007; Wenger, 1999) suggests that teachers might experience vulnerability negotiating identities in response to adverse work circumstances, other studies (Alsup, 2018; Schutz, Hong, & Cross Francis, 2018) argue that this negotiation could work as a catalyst for complex professional identity formation. In Sensei's case, it was not merely a negotiation of her teacher identity. In some other cases, it was as severe as loss of identity.

However, in Desert, Sensei reported that she was under unbearable pressure which aggravated her sense of "I cannot do this anymore". She reported she got cynical and felt physically sick. Sensei's story did not merely suggest identity formation and negotiation; there is obvious empirical evidence of identity deterioration. Sensei was experiencing an identity loss; her comments implied losing her sense of teacher identity because of private ESOL work-life constraints which ended up in her resigning. Numerous studies (Izadinia, 2018; Kroger, 2004; Liu & Xu, 2013; Schutz et al., 2018) discussed the possibility of a loss of teacher identity through a change in the workplace.

It is worth mentioning that while she accepted and was guided by River's internal policies and procedures, she felt pressured and shackled by the educational and market driven policy of Desert. Similar to Desert, River had its own business objectives and revenue-oriented goals to achieve, but her work life was totally different in both places. Surprisingly, while she rejected and criticised the business-driven attitude in Desert, she remained supportive of River's business values and accepted them. In River, she perceived management policies as supportive to her professional learning, and stated that River demonstrated an above-bottom-line level of academic policies and practices. Therefore, it could be argued that her loss of teacher identity in Desert was just connected to the location, as she was able to simultaneously continue teaching effectively in River.

For example, Sensei reported that in Desert she had disputes with students and some of them were not satisfied attending her classes, although she had a long experience in teaching. She said that it does not matter whether she was an experienced or inexperienced teacher, she would be haunted by students' complaints in Desert. On the contrary, in River, she was able to change the teaching materials for the benefit of her students with whom she had a great rapport and very strong professional relationships.

She also noted that her sense of taking control over PLD learning practices varied from one PTE to the other. She welcomed change and enhancement in her teaching practices to the extent

that she applied for an informal learning course to become a Cambridge examiner while working in River. She also reported that the school management supported her financially by paying for the course and finding a relieving teacher to cover her teaching hours. They also supported her emotionally by stating that her PLD activities are also empowerment for the whole institution. Contrarily, she resisted change in Desert, and she was not willing to be part of the institution's intention to compromise students' academic progress to their satisfaction. She rejected change to the extent that she resigned. This concurs with Walker's (2014) description of two different teachers' attitudes towards private ESOL organisations; one suffers from a regimented environment because of the profit motives pursued by management while the other operates professionally utilising regulatory systems. He also argued that what he called *profit-versus-professionalism* tension can affect teachers' professional practices (pp. 161-162).

In conclusion, Sensei's story provides an illustrative example of another dimension of ESOL teacher identity in relation to workplace impact. It has become obvious that context counts and determines a significant measure of teachers' identity formation and consequently their PLD choices. The work context in Sensei's story does not merely refer to the wider context of private ESOL teaching in one city, but also refers to the narrower institutional level. Sensei's story presented context as the walls and bricks, the geographical space, of an institution which mediated cultural, political and historical aspects of teacher identity. Thus, although ESOL as business values seemed inevitable in private institutions, the way management apply these values varies and directly affects teachers' identities and PLD choices. This brought to my mind Ruth's (2018) ideas on problematising the relationship between business and education. He claimed that it is necessary to accept education as a human activity which means taking business out of education (Ruth, 2018). However, in the light of Sensei's story, we might need to reasonably further discuss what business models PTEs should apply in order to balance educational principles and business values to avoid teachers' burnout, and enhance their resilience by supporting their PLD practices. This strongly resonates with the notion of collective influence that contributes to understandings of teacher identity in the workplace and a context of ongoing change (Day, 2018). In conclusion, Sensei's story provides an example of how teacher professional identities fluctuate positively or negatively in response to workplace geographical, political and social influences.

Agency and teacher leadership

Considering Sensei's story as a whole, there is evidence of Sensei as an agentic learner. It is presented in her ability to act independently and collaboratively in response to her individual needs and workplace requirements. Overall, she is able to take decisions to change teaching materials, get engaged in formal and informal PLD activities, evaluate her own performance and plan change accordingly, guide others' learning, and resign from work when she could not cope with change and constraints at the workplace.

Although she reflected on the time she worked in Desert as in a space characterised by social and political constraints, she was still able to make decisions and act on them and these characteristics align with discussions of agency by Apple (2012) and Day (2018) when they stressed the importance of teachers' ability to take an effective role in decision making (Apple, 2012; Day, 2018). She reported that she was challenged by the management attitude towards one student's complaints which did not necessarily match her beliefs, values or teaching ethics.

This highlighted the tension between her values and the institutional directives. She argued that the institution was not completely concerned about creating learning opportunities for this specific student, and was more interested in keeping this student in the institution so it did not lose the money they pay. Thus, she decided to resist the management decision to favour this particular student's immediate wants instead of their real academic needs. Although such resistance to institutional directives might have resulted in ceasing her teaching practices, she seemed determined to keep the same stance of rejecting the idea of treating students as paying customers. An example of Sensei's strong sense of agency has become clear when she made a decision to resign from Desert after the institution management insisted on favouring students' immediate wants and safeguarding revenue. Although this part of her story presents an example of PTEs as a learning environment which constrains teachers' professional practices by prioritising students' satisfaction, and seems to involve bureaucratic inertia, Sensei was still able to practice teacher agency.

One other aspect of Sensei's own sense of agency was her ability to take the initiative and lead her own PLD activities. Although her decision was motivated by other teachers around her who were certified Cambridge examiners in addition to the institution's need of recruiting more examiners, she took the initiative and decided to guide her own in-service PLD by taking a Cambridge examiner training course. In her account, this specific PTE provided an environment which empowered her and facilitated her teacher agency. It is apparent that the

creation of knowledge in Sensei's story was not just an individual process, it was also mediated by the surrounding circumstances; Sensei repeatedly reported that she had clear self-chosen goals which guided her practices and decision making while working in both Desert and River. Therefore, Sensei's story of agentic learning presents teacher agency as a socially situated aspect of teachers' lives. Sensei's teacher agency would not be understood as only an individual responsibility to herself, it is "a contextually enacted way of being in the world" (Van Lier, 2008). She reported that her sense of self-awareness was always guiding her practices. For example, at some stages of her teaching career, she felt the need of relearning and updating herself in relation to teaching techniques for young learners'. She stated that she made decisions to update her knowledge as she felt that she has become a different teacher, and generations of students were changing as well. She noted that, although she was becoming a more mature teacher, this did not mean that her old teaching techniques would work with the young learners of that time.

In conclusion, Sensei's story shows how an ESOL teacher's practices were mediated by sociocultural, geographical and political aspects of workplace. However, the sociocultural mediation process was not a simple one way process, as Sensei reported that she was able to contribute to the mediation of the surrounding society, as well. Her teaching and PLD practices affected other entities as well as herself; she changed the surrounding society by reflecting on action and interacting with the teaching milieu through guiding her own as well as other teachers' sense of agency. This strongly resonates with the ideas of Van Lier (2008) and Day (2018) about the collective agency.

The magpie learner; Sensei's learning philosophy

Sensei's narrative highlighted the complexity of her PLD learning experiences. This complexity stemmed from the variety of interrelated aspects which were mediated by PTEs as a particular work context. Sensei's anecdotes about how she got engaged in various PLD activities showed that she was curious, selective, flexible, adaptable, and aware of change within herself and the surrounding society, too. She called herself a magpie teacher, implying that she was always pulling ideas from different sources continuously, but effectively.

Being a magpie, Sensei talked about various sources of knowledge that she utilised to facilitate her professional learning. She referred to reviewing ESOL literature, talking to colleagues and academic managers, but the apparently most reliable source of knowledge was her past

experience which shaped the biggest part of her knowledge as a teacher and guided her teaching practice and trial and error processes.

To meet the magpie teacher learning goals, Sensei chose to draw on a wide variety of sources of learning pathways. She chose to learn from the internet, talk to colleagues, referring to her past experience; all the PLD pathways required her to take the lead and have a critical stance. She reported that in all the above mentioned learning pathways, learning something new did not mean that she took it for granted. She used to question and experiment with newly learned teaching techniques and strategies before applying them to her classroom practices.

Although Sensei reported utilising a range of learning pathways, her story highlighted the internet as one of the most important PLD resources in her journey of in-service learning about teaching. She explained that she used the internet to look for answers to almost all the unanswered questions in her teaching practice, as this kept her updated with new generation knowledge and topics. She noted that the internet was always available, rich with a wide variety and free of charge. However, she argued that not all the materials offered online can be trusted; she was, therefore, selective. Finally, she stated that the internet can be a useful resource for learning, but it could be a time waster as teachers might spend a longer time than necessary surfing the internet for teachers' or students' learning materials. To avoid wasting time online, she reported that she would stay focused in order to get whatever she needed, and leave immediately.

Other themes which emerged from Sensei's story included referring to past teaching experience as a huge learning resource of ESOL teachers in private ESOL teaching. Although drawing on one's past experience seemed an automated human reaction to being challenged by life conditions, in Sensei's narrative it came as a response to the absence of engaging in-service PLD activities. She noted that she was always utilising her knowledge, gained through long years of teaching and trial and error practices, in dealing with teaching challenges. Sensei's account of how she leaned on past experiences showed her being reflective and creative in the way she questioned her own past practices while often modifying them to suit new teaching and work circumstances. This theme will be discussed in more detail in Emily's story, so it is mentioned only briefly here.

Chapter Seven: Paula Silva the Self-taught Teacher

Learning has always been part of who I am. I like learning things by myself, I just go and do it

(Paula Silva, 2019)

Paula Silva

Paula Silva taught ESOL for more than thirteen years. She started teaching when she was a university student studying biology. When I asked her about her early days as an ESOL teacher, her memories seemed to wiggle their way out of her mind and she said:

I have been teaching for almost thirteen years. I started at university, I was studying biology at this time. I needed to make some extra cash, one of my friends said why do not you teach English!

For thirteen years of ESOL teaching and ELT management, she taught children, young learners and adults. She also taught different levels of students, from elementary to advanced classes, in private and government organisations. She stated that this wide spectrum of ESOL teaching experiences consolidated her understanding of the particular nature of private ESOL teaching.

When I asked her about her ESOL qualifications, she noted that after six years of ESOL teaching, she decided to do her first formal ESOL certification, the in-service certificate in teaching English to adults (ICELT). When I asked her why she had not gained the ICELT certificate earlier in her career, she reported that ESOL qualifications were not among the key requirements to get an ESOL teaching job. All that she needed to do to start an ESOL teaching career was to achieve minimum awareness of the prevailing teaching methodology. Private ESOL institutions in her country did not ask for ESOL qualifications as a prerequisite to have a teaching job. Describing teacher recruitment circumstances in private ESOL institutions, she said:

In the beginning, I did not get any formal training. I was not requested to have any formal ESOL qualifications. The only training I got was in the first place I worked for, it was on the method which they used and the techniques that I should be using to teach. It was a book based drilling course. The only thing that I had to do was to memorise the steps that I had to follow in order to teach my lesson.

When she started taking the role of an ESOL teacher, she perceived that her learning about teaching was insufficient. The institution she worked for had a system for teacher observation

which focused on whether teachers' teaching practices were following the drilling teaching techniques adopted by the institution management. She implied that she was merely requested to abide by the institutional perspectives on teaching techniques and practices. She said she believed that teacher observation should be utilised as a professional learning tool. Then, she thought for a short time, and broke her silence saying:

There was not much teaching development or critical thinking. I was observed every once in a while, but it was about whether I was deviating from their teaching method or not.

She continued talking about her professional practice as an ESOL teacher, and noted that her learning about teaching included attending some other induction training programmes. She gave an example of an incident when she was engaged in induction programmes which included observed teaching, reflection, watching YouTube videos, reviewing the literature, talking to colleagues, and applying trial and error methods.

When I asked her to describe a key milestone in her teaching career, she reported that before moving to New Zealand, she had a complete month of professional learning by attending an induction programme in one of the private ESOL institutions in her home country. During this specific induction, she was introduced to various teaching methods which informed her teaching practices. This combination of informal (teachers' discussions) and formal (teacher induction and ICALT) teacher professional learning supported the development of her professional practices. She explained:

We read articles. We were encouraged in reading books. Also, we were preparing lessons and we were observed. That was the first time I had proper in-service teacher training sessions with people who were teacher trainers. These people were DELTA instructors and were trained as teacher trainers.

Being engaged in professional learning activities

She stated that it was crucial for her to get engaged in continuous in-service professional learning activities. Her continuous learning was always part of her beliefs and guided her professional practices as an ESOL teacher. She reported that:

I think it is my mindset of constant learning, I constantly wanted to improve and become a better teacher. I have always been passionate about learning.

On a different occasion, when we talked about the nature of learning in her life, she confirmed that learning started when she was a child and was surrounded by learning opportunities at home. As a result, she seized every learning opportunity throughout her whole life. She explained:

I think that is because my parents were also very passionate about learning. As I grew up getting books as presents, not toys. And we had reading moments at home, and I would study history with my mum, math with my father. So learning has always been part of who I am. It has always been part of my background. I like learning things by myself.

When I asked her about her learning strategies and how she changed her teaching practices as a teacher, she said that she has been a self-taught person. Professional learning has taken place inside and outside classrooms. She reported:

So I am a self-taught person, I am self-taught how to play the guitar, I have been working on calligraphy by myself, I bought books about it. I am very passionate about learning.

As an ESOL teacher, she was always keen on reading books, reviewing academic journals, and talking to colleagues, she noted. She also learned about ESOL teaching through reflecting on her own practices and being observed and directed by experts. She perceived that most of her learning about teaching came from informal sources and was mediated by the surrounding teaching context. However, when we talked about formal teacher training courses, her voice grew louder and she said:

ICELT is more reflective, so you teach a lesson and then you have to write a report reflecting upon your own teaching. That helped me. First, thinking about why I do the things I do in class? Why are they successful? Why they are not successful? The ICELT literally changed my life, and the way I see myself as a teacher. Before that most of my teaching was based on trial and error.

Although formal learning courses such as ICELT allowed her to reflect on her practices and seek solutions, Paula Silva spoke more frequently about her informal learning as the major director of her teaching practice. She also noted that change in her professional practice was strongly connected to her work context and her ability to accept change and embrace new ideas. She perceived her professional practice as a socially situated activity which requires teachers to be flexible and adaptable. She noted:

You have to be extremely open-minded. You have to learn how to adapt

In response to my questions about describing the motivators of her professional practice, she shared stories about when her professional practice was driven by her own need to learn how to deal with arising issues at work. These occasional and accidental learning opportunities were reported to be effective in changing Paula Silva's classroom practices.

We are teaching people and we have to do anything to help them. It depends on the context if the change is necessary or not. If you are going to teach advanced group of students, you need to prepare well. This requires a lot of change in your actual teaching.

Change in her professional practices

On her first day in Christchurch, Paula Silva reported that she realised that students and ESOL teaching in Christchurch would be different from her home country. Then, she sat thinking for a few seconds, and broke her silence saying that she could not imagine how different the teaching environment would be until she started teaching. She said that she was shocked by the low level of students' participation and the amount of interaction taking place in classrooms. In her home country, unlike Christchurch, students were always responding to teachers' questions and classes were noisy and more interactive. She noted:

When I first arrived, during my first interview with the principal and academic manager, they told me that these students are probably going to be different from what you used to teach. When the actual course started, I faced like, oh, I asked questions and students do not answer. Back home, you have to control people, like I can't hear, everyone speaking at once.

Asking her about the decisions she took to deal with this challenge of moving to a new teaching context; she reported that she reflected on her own practices, and talked to other teachers. She chose to ask other teachers who had dealt with a similar type of challenges. She said:

Sitting in the staff room, I asked other teachers. “What do you do when your students do not answer your question? Is this normal?” Just using examples of what happened, and asking for help. “What do you do? What can I do? Can I do anything about it or do I have to just accept it? How do Asian students work?” That was mainly how I dealt with it.

Enthusiastically, she continued by saying that through having these discussions with other teachers, she learned different approaches to deal with teaching challenges. She also noted that she reviewed a book about different learners’ issues which broadened her understanding of how learning a second language could be tied to the learner’s first language. Then, at a later stage, she decided to talk to students directly, and managed to set some studying rules which have increased students’ participation in the classroom. Then she also shared with me the story about when she said to her students:

Look, you are here to practice your English. I understand that it is not normal for teachers to ask about your contributions and your answers, but I expect that from you. It is a whole process of building students’ confidence. After that, some students raised their hands and started contributing to the whole classroom discussion which was nice.

When I asked her why she chose to adopt this attitude of professional learning and development, she said simply because it was available. She appreciated other forms of learning such as formal courses and ESOL conferences, but talking to students and other teachers was the only option to deal with students’ engagement problems. She noted:

It was because of what I had in hand. Yes, I could go to a conference but no conferences were happening at this time. I could have watched webinars, but that never even crossed my mind. I went straight to colleagues and books. After all, I have this tendency of going for books because I read a lot. That’s my favourite medium of acquiring knowledge, colleagues and books!

After that she continued by talking about the reasons she trusted colleagues and books as professional learning resources, reporting that she chose to talk to colleagues as they can provide learning in a less stressful manner. Teachers’ talk was informal and more relaxing for her to learn from compared to reading academic books or watching online videos, as she noted:

They [*colleagues*] have in-classroom experience in the context that I am at, so they can give me more tips and lower my anxiety. This is something that books cannot really do. So you have that human touch. I also like books because they are reliable, and they have a face value. They probably have been through a process of editing, and usually, I trust books more than I trust YouTube videos.

She also stated that successful experiences enhanced her intrinsic motivation for continuous learning and changing her actual professional practices. For example, she said that after successfully dealing with students' lack of participation, she was motivated to deal with other issues such as increasing her professional knowledge. She stated:

It was fruitful for me. And I think I have a better understanding of my students, now that I have done it. Now I am over that, and I am working with writing skills, because I feel that I need to improve students' writing skills that required developing my own teaching techniques in teaching writing.

Being a self-taught teacher

Continuing our discussion about Paula Silva's informal in-service professional learning, she shared many stories with me about taking charge of her professional practice. She was always driven by her passion for learning and her non-stop curiosity. She said:

I do a lot of self-study. So learning has always been part of who I am. It has always been part of my background. I like learning things by myself. So I am self-taught how to play the guitar, I have been working on calligraphy by myself, I bought books about it, and I am very passionate about learning. I learned about teaching pretty much the same way.

When I asked her about experiences of successful change in her own professional practices, she talked about the time when she was engaged in a teaching induction programme. In this programme, she was allowed to experiment with various teaching methodologies, and was guided by a group of in-house teacher trainers. She highlighted the importance of having real professional guidance from in-house experienced teacher PLD facilitators. She noted:

That was one of the successful programs, in terms of teacher development, where I used to work. For the first year, teachers have a tutor, and they

were observed four times. They prepare lessons together, and I think that's really helpful.

Then, I asked her about the impact of those induction programmes and of mentoring on her professional practice. She commented that attending these PLD events changed not only her views of ESOL teaching, but also her actual teaching practices inside classrooms. She went on by explaining the reasons behind this change as these sessions were important to her, and she liked working with sessions' facilitators. She also pointed out that the sessions' facilitators were mainly publishers, textbook authors who had a lot of experience in the ESOL field. She noted:

They were much more experienced than me. They had the qualifications. I recognised them as some authorities in the business. They are book publishers, they write for international blogs, they are part of SEGEs.

She also asserted that mentors should share the same teaching context with teachers in order to be able to guide their professional practice effectively. In her experience, PLD specialists or teacher mentors were much more effective when they were situated in the same teaching context with mentored teachers. She reported benefitting considerably from those PLD specialists as they have had experience in the same teaching context: they have had location experience which allowed them to reflect on real teachers' needs. She preferred not to listen to someone who came from a different teaching context just to preach to her about what to teach. She accepted in-house mentors as "people that are excellent" when she explained:

They are excellent people, so why am I going to pay more attention to a guy who comes from London and does not teach the same students as I do? You have people here that are excellent. I work together with those and work together with those amazing publishers. They are here, so I should pick their brains as much as I can.

Teaching circumstances in PTEs

Paula Silva worked for the same PTE for more than two years, and appreciated the space the institution offered to teachers to reflect and improve their teaching practice. She said that she felt more comfortable and less pressured while teaching in the Christchurch private sector compared to her teaching experience in her home country where teachers were really under the

stress of students' success rates. She talked about teaching circumstances in Christchurch, and stated:

We are teaching people, and we have to do something to help them. Change depends on the context in which you teach. I think the way it is done here is ok, I think teachers have a lot of freedom to whatever they want inside the class.

When I asked her to walk me through an experience when her professional practice was supported by the institution's policies, she shared a story with me when some of her students failed to pass the final test in a language course. She was extremely worried about her professional performance as a teacher. She reflected on this experience indicating:

Well, I do not feel pressured by the institution as a whole in terms of results and performance. For example, last semester students did not pass the test, and because I have this background of lots of pressure. I was like "so that's my fault, I could have done more." And the institution was like, "you don't have to worry about this, I'm sure you did your job." How did you know? My students failed, so I am not doing my job. So it is a problem with the test? Is the test design for them to fail? Is the course good enough?

When I asked her about the feedback she received from the institution on the reason why students did not pass the course, she confirmed that they said:

It was the students' fault, as they did not work hard enough.

When I asked her about her own opinion about that situation and why students could not pass, she explained that she still felt responsible for students' outcomes and she suggested the need for a more in-depth investigation into students' results and the reasons why they could not achieve academic success. She said:

We should prepare them to pass. So I feel that there should be more reflection.

When I asked her to evaluate the institution's management's performance in response to students' failure, she thought that there were several unanswered questions which should be raised and shared with teachers. She declared that the problem might be the lack of professional dialogues with teachers, and she noted:

I think it is bad. We have a problem somewhere; if the majority of the students are failing, we have a problem with entry requirements, or maybe we have a problem with testing, or maybe you have a problem with the course. Maybe you have a problem with the teachers, and how well prepared they are to deliver the course. So where is the problem? Or maybe the course is designed for them to fail, and only the good ones to get accepted, because the university wanted the best. This is fine for me, but tell me that so I do not stress out over my own teaching. Be transparent!

Continuing talking about the role institutions play in shaping her professional practice, she referred back to her early teaching experiences in her home country. She commented that she did not have a chance to reflect and improve her teaching practice. She said:

The first two schools that I taught for, I had to remember the literature ideas, there was no reflection; why I was doing it that way? I did not know.

While she presented the change as a crucial element in ESOL teachers' work lives, she stated that in ESOL institutions in Christchurch there was a lack of effective facilitation of change. When I asked her about who took care of guiding her professional development at this specific stage of her career, she noted:

No one is taking care of creating this change in teachers' mindset, to my knowledge, no one.

Although she described herself as an independent learner, she confirmed that she never thought that change in her practices would be done alone or on a solo basis. She emphasised that her learning practices were always part of the surrounding social environment such as her parents at home and colleagues at work. She insisted:

It cannot be done alone!

Then, she extended the idea of collaborative learning, suggesting that it was not a good idea to give teachers absolute freedom to do whatever they wanted. Allowing teachers to work without guidelines might result in serious teaching problems she noted. She stated:

This might be dangerous, because teachers can do whatever they want, and whatever they believe is right or effective. We just have a book, we can follow that book in any way we want, and there are not many guidelines.

Asking her why she thought that implementing change in teachers' practices should be monitored and guided by professionals, she noted:

We [*teachers*] do not want to change because change is uncomfortable.

Her professional practice and talking to colleagues

The ideas of having a mentor were discussed with Paula Silva in different interviews, and her responses presented constant messages that she would prefer to have a mentor or a tutor who can validate her findings and support her in taking necessary corrective actions when needed, as she noted:

Some people do not like having an external moderator because they feel like they are being judged. They think it is personal; I do not. I would have someone observing me every month if I could.

Basically, she perceived that, as a teacher, she had a specific set of beliefs and it was not easy to change her professional practices unless she was fully convinced with the new practices. However, she noted that teachers always needed to benefit from the learning opportunities offered within the surrounding learning community. She stated that she learned more from the in-house training sessions compared to attending famous conferences. She confirmed that she could see value in conferences, but she benefited more from contextualised learning experiences. She stated:

I had training in pretty much anything; pronunciation, reading, writing skills, whatever. We had in-house training with the academic department, and we also had writers and publishers who used to come once a year. I usually liked the in-house training better than the fancy well known publishers, because the things they are saying were brilliant and fantastic, but I could not apply them in my classroom. In-house training was much more relevant for me because those people were the ones thinking about the courses, and they had taught the lessons, and they knew what was really relevant and meaningful for my teaching context.

She continued to talk about the value of conferences and the benefit of hearing from others, she stated that she might need to have ideas from an outsider on certain generic teaching skills, such as using technology. She confirmed that, although outside experts are experienced and have the knowledge, people in her teaching context are more experienced about their particular

teaching context. Therefore, she still saw the advantages of both ways of improving their practices.

Besides, she repeatedly revisited the idea of having an in-house mentor. She perceived having a mentor in the same workplace is similar to having an in-house expert who continuously could act as an external assessor. In her past experiences, classroom observations have given validation to her new practices, and offered her further learning opportunities. She asserted:

I think I like having a tutor or someone observing my lessons to have an external point of view to help me with my self-awareness. Maybe I should not be worrying too much about writing, maybe I should be worried about feedback. But I do not know, because I do not have an external moderator to give me a different point of view. So what I really like about mentoring programmes, coaching programmes, is that you have this external moderator to help you; someone who is in theory more experienced than you, more knowledgeable than you. I would have someone observing me every month if I could.

When I asked her whether this type of guided professional learning might reduce teachers' chances of making independent decisions about their professional practice, she said that mentors should foster self-awareness and autonomy. She viewed the relationship between the mentors and mentored teachers as a collaborative activity. She noted:

It depends, if you have a good tutor and a good mentor, they should be fostering self-awareness and autonomy. It is part of the whole of building yourself self-awareness. The whole process of coaching is not providing you with the answers. It's making you reflect so that you know how to look for the answers yourself.

She was quite happy to learn on her own but she needed an external moderator to validate her practices, she reported. She also stated that having a mentor was not necessarily contradicting her learning on her own and taking charge of her professional practice. She noted that she believed she was always an independent learner, but she preferred to have a mentor who could provide feedback and guidance. She said:

I quite like learning things on my own. But I feel like a person, I need some sort of validation. So yes I am quite happy learning on my own, but I would also like to have someone who's doing some extra work with me.

Then we discussed formal and informal mentoring and I asked her about her preference concerning teacher observation. I asked her whether she prefers to have a critical friend or gets engaged in a systematic observation which requires being observed by an expert and getting systematic feedback. In response to this, she said that she preferred to be engaged in more systematic learning activities, as this guaranteed dedication and enhanced the quality of the reflection process compared to informal or casual colleagues. She preferred coaching and mentoring programmes to take place in a practical manner which allows her to be observed, reflect on her teaching, and manage change in her practices. She concluded:

I like things that are well structured. So when we are going to meet every other week to talk about last week's teaching and create an action plan. This suits me, as I know that this person is going to dedicate her time to it, whereas something that is more casual they might not be actually taking their time to be there.

Intrinsic Motivation

Reflecting on her experience of working as an ESOL teacher in Christchurch and a branch manager in her home country, Paula Silva argued that the common belief among educators that ESOL teachers always love learning should not be taken for granted. In her experience, it was more convenient for teachers to remain in their comfort zone unless their motivation came from within. Professional learning and adopting change is not always a pleasant experience in which teachers would volunteer to get engaged. She said:

You do not motivate people. It does not matter, you cannot give teachers motivation. Extrinsic motivation does not work. It is all about what is intrinsic. The theory of extrinsic motivation has been debunked for a time now. Teachers might go to training sessions, but the big question is always whether they apply what they learn to their classroom teaching.

Then I asked her to explain further the relationship between her teaching practices, workplace, and accepting or resisting change. She went on by explaining that teachers might resist change. She emphasised that teachers might get engaged in discussions about modern teaching

techniques in conferences and seminars, but this does not necessarily have a direct impact on their actual teaching practices. They might stick to their old teaching habits and tested teaching practices which secure a safe teaching choice. She highlighted that being engaged in a formal teacher professional learning programme is not sufficient to create change in their actual practices. As an alternative, she highlighted intrinsic motivation as a key factor in guiding change in teachers' professional practice: She noted:

In my experience, I worked in a language centre that invested lots of money in teacher training. You could see that we had teachers that were there just because it was mandatory. Some teachers were there because they really wanted to improve their teaching and they were actually applying all that they have learned in their classrooms, and some teachers were just there because someone told them to do so.

Self-awareness and her professional practice

In our further discussions about Paula Silva's in-service formal and informal learning, she talked about the concept of self-awareness. In her view, self-awareness referred to the ability to reflect on her own practices, and how her actions were connected to the surrounding society which includes other teachers and students. She explained:

This requires a lot of self-awareness processing. Why you do things the way you do? Why do you believe that what you do is conducive to students' learning?

She also noted that understanding and reflecting on *the self* as an ESOL teacher should be continuous and constantly evolving in nature. She also argued that learning by reflecting on her own teaching practices is what she definitely needed rather than being engaged in activities which merely were top-down and were designed to dictate to her what to do in the classroom. At the same time, she perceived enhancing self-awareness as a complicated process which requires a huge effort and professional guidance from the surrounding society. She said:

Learning how to be self-aware about your teaching is a very difficult process, especially for teachers.

On many occasions, she presented self-awareness as a key construct of teachers' development and tied it to her need of professional feedback on her teaching. In response to my question

about the relationship between her sense of self-awareness and change in her professional practices, she asserted:

They [teachers] should be constantly looking for ways to improve. It is very difficult to say how often, like you should read a book or an article every month; I do not know. It depends on your own self-awareness, how well am I doing? Where should I be? Where there is room for improvement? Self-awareness is the key to improvement, I think.

Then she continued by saying that this process required much guidance from experienced mentors who are locally situated and socially informed. Although she was always referring to herself as a self-taught person, she highlighted the essential role of the surrounding society in fostering her sense of self-awareness. She reported that being observed and mentored by experienced mentors had a very positive impact on her ability to identify her professional needs and hold a more reflective position towards them. She said:

I think, I like having a tutor or someone observing my lessons to have an external point of view to help me with my self-awareness.

I asked her whether having a tutor might contradict her attitude of being a self-taught teacher. I also said that she might not have complete control over her professional practice. She replied that her collaborative experiences were mostly successful. She explained:

It depends, if you have a good tutor and a good mentor, they will not only be fostering self-awareness, but also autonomy by observing a lesson and reflecting on it, and then you get feedback. It is a part of building your self-awareness. The whole process of coaching is not providing you with the answers. It is making you reflect so that you know how to look for the answers yourself.

Paula Silva also suggested criteria for successful mentoring. She said that having a mentor can foster teachers' creativity and allow them to have control over their professional practices. She recommended that teacher mentors should be well qualified and experienced in ESOL teaching. They also should be reflective, research-minded and know how to facilitate teachers' professional practices rather than providing them with answers.

Being an agentic teacher

Discussing the frequency of change in her teaching practices, she noted that she was always a decisive teacher who was reflecting in action (inside the classroom) and on action (outside the classroom). She always had confidence in her skills and abilities as a teacher, and she also learned from the surrounding community of teachers. When asked about the sources of change in her professional practice, she referred to her past experiences as the first source of knowledge. Then, she highlighted talking to colleagues as one of the biggest learning opportunities. She also referred to reading books and watching online videos and tutorials. Learning from online materials and finding PLD activities online such as teachers' forums and discussion platforms were among sources which guided change in her professional practice, as well. She noted:

I have the experience, the real life experience from my colleagues and from what I have experienced myself and what the books tell me. So I check how much of the book is feasible or applicable to my context, as obviously books are meant to cater for a wider range of platforms which might not be applicable to what I am doing here, so you have to pick and choose. It depends on what has been suggested, because I have a different context here.

She chose between various PLD resources, as she referred to learning resources availability and then moved to their quality. She said that she usually approaches what was available such as ESOL teaching books and then started looking for other learning sources to confirm her findings by asking colleague teachers about their experiences or going to an online teachers' forum. She also said that books represented more a genuine professional learning resource to her. In response to my question about why she prefers books as well as ESOL published papers, she argued that books and academic journals were written by trusted authors, and must have been through scrutinised process of editing and reviewing before being presented to teachers. She said:

I trust books more rather than going online. When I go online, I have to look for reliable sources. The reliable sources are either a book author, or someone who is quoting from a book author that I know, or a scientific published paper.

During our further discussion about her ability to take charge of and make decisions about her own professional practices, she referred to her inner sense of responsibility towards her job and students' learning. Then, she shared a story about when she was assigned as an EAP writing teacher for the first time and she felt the need to learn more about various writing genres. She asserted that it was a significant responsibility to be assigned as a writing teacher, and she felt the necessity to be prepared for this course. Therefore, she decided to learn about teaching writing techniques for the benefit of her students. She reported:

I reflect on my teaching. My previous experiences of teaching writing skills were completely different from what I do here (Christchurch). I thought it is a lot of responsibility. The course I am going to teach is pretty much based on teaching writing skills, learn how to write. So I thought I have to step up my game. Even before I stepped into my classroom, I thought I should do something about this. I need to feel safe in terms of what I am teaching. If you know that you are going to teach something that is not part of your repertoire, you should prepare for it. That was it, I am going to teach writing in a way that I am not used to teaching it, so I have to prepare for this.

Then, we discussed the key motives behind her sense of being responsible and her determination to get engaged in preparation before the beginning of the course. When I asked her about other reasons for her continuing keenness on learning, she stated that she wanted to be a good teacher for her students. She explained the rationale behind her attitude towards maintaining the image of a professional teacher, she said:

I want to be a good teacher for my students, I need to feel safe in terms of what I am teaching, if you know that you are going to teach something that is not part of your repertoire, you should prepare for it. It is the same thing when you are going to teach advanced levels you have to prepare a whole range of vocabulary that might come up in the discussion and you have to study it. I want to feel competent in what I am doing.

When I asked her about her decisions to take responsibility for learning and get engaged in PLD activities while she is still doing these short-term EAP courses, she argued that it was her conscious decision to be responsible for enhancing her professional practice. She said that it was her sense of being a successful teacher that facilitated her learning. She was always

engaged in self-evaluation and reflection to improve her practices and avoid repeating less effective teaching practices. She said:

I think I put a lot of pressure on myself. The feeling that you failed is awful for me. I am a teacher. If I finish my lesson and something went wrong I feel extremely frustrated, I should have done something different.

Her decisions to adopt these agentic strategies towards her professional practice were evident in the three interviews. She reported that these decisions changed her teaching practices in many ways. It made her acquire a range of learning skills such as identifying relevant learning resources. It made her more capable of practising resourcing, developing the skill of searching for and locating suitable professional learning resources. Also, she noted she was becoming more reflective and being more critical towards her practices. She also felt that she was more skilful in finding answers for her day-to-day unanswered teaching questions, as she knew where and how to find information about specific teaching areas such as grammar teaching. Paula Silva's ability to make self-generated decisions and acting on them changed the way she approached learning materials, and deepened her understanding of her own teaching practices. She argued:

I became more skilful in finding good readings and knew where to find answers for my questions quickly. I am much more aware of why is it that we do things the way we do.

Learning within the wider teaching context

Paula Silva talked repeatedly about the time when she made conscious decisions to position her learning within the larger teaching context which was not limited to herself and students, but included colleague teachers and institution management. She also reported that once the institution's management instructed teachers to stop using students' first language in English language classes. She chose to abide by the institution's policy, but she was not fully convinced that she should not use students' first language as a learning resource. She noted that the institutional directives could not change her understanding of using students' first language as a learning tool which facilitated her students' learning of English as a second language. This did not stop her from experimenting with the usage of students' first language in her classes until the institution management accidentally came across some research that supported using the first language in classrooms. She added:

Using L1 in the classroom was forbidden until the mindset of the school changed and we had a training session on how to use L1 effectively in the classroom. They realised that skipping L1 for elementary students is extremely challenging. So how do we deal with this, we make it prohibited or we make it in a way that is effective and helping students' learning. I can see the benefit of using L1 in the classroom. I was convinced that there is something good about L1. I was convinced that using a few words from L1 is helpful, that was before research said that it is ok. I tried out that in the class, and see rapport among students and with myself.

When I asked her about how the change in the institution policy towards using L1 in the classroom affected her teaching practices, she said that the new policy reduced tension between what she believed and how she taught. She had resisted the imposed change which did not match her teaching philosophy, but she had to take the risk of breaking the institution's rules. She explained the change in her attitude saying:

I did not have that chain that I absolutely cannot use L1. That took a lot of stress out of the lesson, I felt more comfortable, and there is no tension.

While Paula Silva has always been an advocate of teachers' individual choices and she never accepted change without questioning it, she perceived change as a social activity. She suggested that changing teachers' beliefs could be impossible without considering their beliefs, respecting their cognition, and allowing them to embrace the change rather than imposing it on them. She argued:

I think it is changing a mindset; if a person comes and said "we are not going to teach writing by using English, we are going to work with the translation method" and there are books that say that translation can work, but I don't believe that translation works. So you can stand in front of me for three hours talking about this new method, but if I do not believe in it, I will not accept this change. You have to show me the relevance, and how can this improve and change students' lives. I think what teachers feel sometimes is that we are not teaching books, we are teaching people and we need to do anything to help them.

She also argued that change in her teaching practices was not always a comfortable experience. When I asked her to walk me through one experience of change in her professional practice,

she reported some unpleasant experiences of coping with change at the workplace such as her experience of the monolingual classes. As a result, she highlighted the importance of the work environment as an effective agent in changing teachers' professional practice. She explained:

It is very difficult for people to change. We do not want to change, because change is uncomfortable. But of course, it has to come from within. I think context should be part of every teacher reflective process to say ok, is this applicable? Or even if you do not know if it is applicable or not, try it out and see if it works. If it does not work adapt it.

When I asked her to walk me through one of these experiences when she changed her teaching practices while considering the teaching context, she shared a story when she took decisions to evaluate her students' abilities to understand and use specific grammar points. As soon as she realised that the students were not achieving progress because teaching materials were less relevant to their personal lives, she decided to change the teaching materials to reflect more personalisation. She said:

You are doing something one way, and then you read about, and then you say ok, maybe the reason why my students were not able to master that grammar point because I was not personalising the language. Once you personalise, they tend to forget less or make fewer mistakes. Then I go for online resources on how to increase students' participation and find activities, pick and choose some of them.

When I asked her why she chose to take control over professional practices, make decisions, and implement change, she noted that she was always a person who loved to learn things independently. She went on explaining:

It has already been part of who I am. Learning things by myself. Because I was teaching something new, I have to prepare for it. And this is what I did back home, I did not do much reading about teaching, but I was an extremely well prepared teacher.

Her views of private ESOL teaching

In two out of the three interviews I had with Paula Silva, she talked about the particular economic dimension of private ESOL teaching. I once asked her about her views of those who consider private ESOL teaching as a business, she confidently replied:

Yeah, it is a business. It is a money making machine.

Then, she was silent for a short time. After that, she pulled up her thoughts and said

It should be run like a business.

Then I asked her to elaborate more on her views of private ESOL teaching as an enterprise, she asserted that she does accept the notion that private ESOL teaching should be accepted and run as a business. She argued that both institutions and teachers should accept the practical dynamics of this particular work context. She explained:

It is a business, and I do not necessarily think this is bad. In a business you should always be striving to be better. It is high time teachers are encouraged to be better, constantly improving inside the classroom.

When I asked her about how she developed this attitude towards ESOL teaching in comparison to traditional businesses such as food and other services, she noted that she has accumulated this perception throughout her long experience in private ESOL teaching. She accumulated years of experience as well as her own understanding of the field dynamics. She argued:

For eight years I was at a school that has a business-like mindset, and I identify with it. I understand why they do the way they do. I carried this understanding with me.

When I asked her to describe her experience of balancing ESOL teaching principles and business values, she replied saying:

At the beginning it was hard, and still causing me some frustration, but you are teaching students who have paid a lot of money to come and study here.

Then, she went on by confirming that dealing with private ESOL teaching as a business was inevitable. She said:

I cannot escape from it.

In her stories about her relationship with students and the institution's management, Paula Silva implied that she has always been keen on establishing an instant rapport with students and has supported the institutions' directives so she can contribute to the institutional goals of achieving revenue as well as a social good.

Key Themes that emerge

While reading the narrative of Paula Silva, the following themes emerge.

Teachers' emancipation and self-affirmation

One key theme in Paula Silva's story is her views about the nature of in-service teachers' independence in response to the sociocultural teaching context. In her individual pursuit of learning, she noted that she was always a curious person who generally appreciated learning opportunities in life. Other participants such as Mary, and Sensei reported resisting the top-down decision-making in private ESOL organisations, and they chose to stick to teacher-led practices. Compared to them, Paula Silva adopted a slightly different position towards teacher independence and autonomy. While she asserted that teachers should own and direct change in their professional practice, she suggested that they should be guided by experts, and challenged by the surrounding community. She also perceived her professional role as an agent of change whose voice needs to be heard.

Paula Silva's positioning resonated with studies (Fredriksson, 2009; Lim, Fickel, & Greenwood, 2019), which emphasised the role social influences play in shaping in-service teacher professional practices. Although these studies investigated the context of publicly-funded schools, their findings supported the notion of the complexity of teachers' professional practice. Walker (2011a, 2014) discussed the impact of the work environment in PTEs on teachers' professional practices, and asserted that work context plays a significant role in the development of teacher knowledge and identity as teachers are expected to act as professionals and service providers at the same time (p. 310).

While highlighting the dynamics of social interaction between teachers and the surrounding environment, Paula Silva also asserted that teachers need to get engaged in individually-initiated and self-directed professional practices. She reported that she embraced and supported change when she owned it. From a relatively different position, she also firmly asserted that leaving teachers to take complete charge of their learning without mentoring and guidance from in-house experienced PLD facilitator is naive and could become problematic. In other words, Paula Silva constantly advocated the principle of teachers' independence, and said that teacher independence secures chances of teachers' innovation and creativity. However, her story added a new dimension to the argument of teacher emancipation and teacher sense of independence. Paula Silva's stories implied her rejection of the notion of leaving teachers absolutely alone to act as individual agents of change. As an experienced ESOL teacher and previously an ESOL

institution manager, she recommended coating teacher independence with guidance from experts who come from the same teaching context.

Paula Silva's arguments about independence and teacher emancipation resonate with Evers and Kneyber (2016) who suggested a more democratic managerial perspective to teachers' practices as a tool to change education from the ground up. They argued that decisions about giving autonomy and trust to teachers are often mismanaged: either absolute freedom is given to teachers or it is so limited that it is hardly noticed. They also asserted that empowering teachers should neither be interpreted as teachers being passive objects waiting for an expert to successfully free them from the constraints of their old practices, nor be accepted as ultimate teachers' autonomy which might leave the back door open for false ideas of absolute freedom for teachers (p. 281). Paula Silva's narrative highlighted the necessity of encouraging teachers' autonomy and participation in decision making, as it would allow them to benefit from experienced mentors as well as in-house experts. Paula Silva suggested that the understanding of teachers taking control of their practices should not be placed on a continuum of self-directed learning on one side and monitored and rote learning on the other. Thus, she noted that teachers can simultaneously act as successful independent learners while being engaged in collaborative learning and being guided by experts.

Paula Silva's professional practices have represented her learning as a complex and multilayered process that can exist on various levels at the same time. These various layers of learning were not isolated from the surrounding environment, as her individual practices had an impact on her collaborative learning activities. Both individual and collaborative learning practices were mediated by the surrounding influences of the work context. While work context has been repeatedly reported to have an impact on Paula Silva's actual professional practices, both work context and her professional practice exchanged positions of subject and object continuously, and in an inconsistent pattern.

Experiences of In-house PLD in Paula Silva's work life

Paula Silva talked about the importance of having in-house PLD facilitators who are trained to be teacher mentors. She also said that she viewed mentors and PLD facilitators who guided her professional learning as role models and gurus in the field of ESOL. However, she proposed criteria for PLD specialists which included ESOL teacher training qualifications, location experience, and ESOL teaching qualifications.

In her anecdotes she talked more than once about these specific criteria for the selection of PLD specialists. In her view, experts should be in-house and locally informed, as she noticed that people with locally-situated experience in private ESOL teaching are expected to guide teachers' development efficiently. She also argued that experts from outside might not have a broader understanding of work conditions compared to in-house ones. Another quality Paula Silva added to these selection criteria is having a reflective mentality through which they can guide knowledge transfer to teachers. According to Paula Silva, a successful PLD facilitator should not provide teachers with prepared answers to their teaching issues. Rather, they should facilitate teachers' reflection and allow them to have control over their learning rather than imposing previously tried techniques on them.

In relation to the availability of PLD opportunities at workplace, Paula Silva noted that it is not necessarily true that academic managers and programme coordinators are skilled PLD facilitators. They could be busier facilitating academic matters such as students' placement, teacher scheduling, assessment preparation and exam administration rather than designing teacher PLD activities. In her past experiences, there were institutions' managers who were not even ESOL qualified, and most of the offered PLD activities were driven by institutional needs. Thus, she felt that teachers' PLD was a one-sided process. Alternatively, Paula Silva suggested that it is important to hire a PLD specialist to facilitate teachers' professional learning like an insider, and not from an outsider perspective. Therefore, she thought that having in-house PLD specialists who are bottom up oriented can facilitate teachers' initiating and having full charge of their practices. An in-house mentor, as suggested by Paula Silva, would support establishing a locally-informed understanding of ESOL teaching which respects and consider teachers' voices in relation to their teaching context. Biesta (2015) indicated the need of considering teachers' judgement, and highlighted its impact on teaching theory and practice. Besides, he described the current professional space provided to teachers as "curtailed and in some cases completely undermined" and called for democratic and accountable professional practices to be taken by teachers and educational actors to reclaim teachers' professionalism (pp. 86-89).

Paula Silva's story has not only described differently the role of PLD facilitators, but classroom observations were also criticised as being a tool to double check whether teachers are applying what they have learned. Observing teachers to check whether their teaching practices in classrooms abide by what they were told to do, in a top-down manner, was heavily criticised in the literature (Evers & Kneyber, 2016). The nature of teacher observation in Paula Silva's story implies an informative nature compared to the summative one, as she said that teachers

should be guided by mentors who facilitate their learning and allow them to figure out solutions for themselves in bottom up techniques. She stated that one role of teacher observation could be preventing teachers from getting involved in bad teaching practices through corrective actions which are mainly created and controlled by teachers themselves. She asserted that she needed to see their relevance to the teaching context before applying any of the mentors' or experts' suggestions to her classroom practices.

In conclusion, Paula Silva thought that no matter whether being an experienced or a novice teacher, an independent one should interact with the surrounding community and learn from others. Being isolated and fiercely defensive about one's own knowledge would create a toxic environment at the workplace. This toxic teaching environment affects teachers' professionalism as well as the whole organisation. She noted that human beings prefer to have and make choices, practice independent learning, and make self-created decisions. Thus, taking full control over one's PLD practices does not necessarily contradict cooperating with colleagues and experts in the field.

Interdependence and in-service teacher's practices

Another key theme in Paula Silva's narrative is her sense of interdependence as a key construct of her professional practices. She asserted that she is an intrinsically motivated practitioner and change in her practices has been motivated by her inner and professional sense of being a teacher. She also recommended the need of having in-house well-educated and ESOL-qualified mentors to guide and enhance her individualised PLD activities. As stated above, her narrative showed how these two concepts, apparently contradicting each other, could be interwoven to formulate her professional practice. Paula Silva's independence was reported as interacting with the social work milieu, and benefit from others' experiences.

This resonates with the philosophical underpinnings of the social interdependence theory which describes the relationship between individuals and others' actions in a community. Johnson and Johnson (2009) discussed two types of social interactions among agents in the same educational context, and classified them into positive and negative interdependence. They also differentiated between social interdependence, independence, social dependence and helplessness; the key difference among all these processes relies on the extent to which an individual's goal is connected to others' goal achievement.

In other words, interdependence can result in promotive interaction where individuals complete each other, or oppositional interaction where individuals discourage each other from reaching

their goals. They also stated that positive interdependence is associated with substitutability, positive cathexis, and inducibility (pp. 365-366). Furthermore, Lim, Fickel and Greenwood (2019) argued that establishing positive partnerships at the workplace between teachers and managers or colleagues had a strong positive influence on teachers' sense of ownership change in their practices rather than accepting it as a part of the institutional policy. These ideas around positive and negative interdependence and partnerships at work provided a theoretical framework to discuss Paula Silva's understanding of herself as an independent teacher.

Paula Silva's story presented the independent teacher who can practice positive interdependence while interacting with the surrounding social, political, and cultural influences. The way she described the relationship between an in-service independent teacher and a professional mentor shows the need of trust, and openness between the two. Her discussion about having in-house mentors implies that teachers' professional practices would better be based on collaborative activities and shared responsibility. Encouraging positive interdependency among ESOL teachers can enhance their sense of agency and resilience. However, according to Paula Silva, creating an agentic and resilient teaching community should not be an individual responsibility of teachers, but a collaborative goal to be achieved by different stakeholders in the field.

PLD options and practices

The unique nature of Paula Silva's PLD practices came as an essential theme in her story. Her choice of specific professional learning activities played a significant role in her ability to initiate and lead change in her teaching practices. Her learning biographies and trajectories throughout her career reflected her creativity and innovative practices. Paula Silva reported that she has been able to take control of her professional learning, and has individually and collaboratively taken decisions to face challenges. She chose to get engaged in activities which were coated by curiosity, independency, interdependency and agentic learning.

The nature of her PLD practices constituted informal rather than formal learning. While she had one formal ESOL certificate, in the first six years of her career she attended a group of induction programmes and was engaged in teacher discussions and teaching reflection activities. She also stated that most of these PLD activities were unplanned and emerged out of necessity such as her need to complete an induction programme to be able to start a new job. This reflected the less systematic nature of her professional learning. In addition, her in-service

learning drew on various resources such as family, culture, personal interests which mediated her in-service practices compared to formal education courses.

Due to the particular teaching environment of private ESOL institutions, Paula Silva's formal certification was not a prerequisite for having an ESOL teaching job. Therefore, her learning has been mainly agentic which required her to take the initiative in most cases. She was always keen on seizing learning opportunities and figuring out solutions for daunting teaching challenges individually, as she felt that nobody else would do this on her behalf. Although it might seem haphazard in nature, Paula Silva's learning which was mediated by her work context, allowed her to mediate the surrounding environment by making choices and promoting practices.

Paula Silva's story has differentiated between conventional in-service teacher professional learning opportunities and how ESOL teachers' professional knowledge is constructed. This was essential for the understanding of how in-service teachers construct their knowledge which directly informed their professional practices. While her knowledge about teaching has been mainly formed from a mixture of past experiences, social interactions, and personal attempts to acquire knowledge, a smaller amount of her professional learning was formed by attending systematic formal education courses. Thus, Paula Silva's story implied that professional learning was mainly informal and was guided by informal sources rather than university courses or ESOL teaching diplomas.

ESOL as business

Another very important theme in Paula Silva's story is the way she viewed private ESOL teaching as a business. She has clearly stated that she advocated the notion of considering business values while running an ESOL institution. Her attitude towards ESOL teaching as a commodity was highlighted when she stated that due to her long experience in business-driven schools, she understood why institutions may apply some business values to this particular educational context.

Referring to the teachers' understanding and their role in operating successful ESOL teaching in the private sector, Paula Silva highlighted the importance of teachers' understanding of the dual nature of private ESOL teaching. She also stressed the role teachers should have in providing the best services to students who have paid a large amount of money to study in New Zealand. Tackling the tension between ESOL teaching educational principles and business values, some voices (Fredriksson, 2009; Walker, 2013, 2014) called for the need of *market-*

oriented teachers who are expected to fulfil their duties in relation to the essential business values such as contributing to an institution's marketing and customer satisfaction. Simultaneously, teachers are expected to adhere to educational principles such as demonstrating best teaching. This nature of private ESOL teaching, raised a range of operational challenges for teachers, and provoked a debate among practitioners on whether teachers should be or wish to be market-oriented (Walker, 2014).

Reflecting on her understanding of the nature of private ESOL teaching in her home country as well as New Zealand, Paula Silva argued that she perceives business values in private ESOL teaching as an advantage. She noted that business values, such as competition between organisations to achieve the best quality and the highest rate of students' satisfaction and retention, could present a motivation for the teacher to permanently strive for better teaching practices and get engaged in ongoing professional learning activities.

Chapter Eight: Ruth the Teacher Researcher

Teachers Learn by Doing

I want to be a good teacher. I want the students to know that the class is worth their money
(Ruth, 2019)

Meeting Ruth

Ruth has been teaching for almost four years and stopped teaching for a period of time in the middle. She completed the certificate of English language teaching to adults (CELTA) course from one a reputable teacher training centre overseas, and taught there for one summer programme. Then she had a number of ESOL teaching jobs in two different countries including New Zealand. Teaching in two different contexts allowed her to teach various types of the adult-student population; she taught Saudis, Brazilians, Turkish. In NZ, students have been prominently Chinese, and she taught different levels from beginner to advanced level in one post-school private training establishment (PTE).

During our discussion about her work life in her home country and New Zealand, she said that due to specific teaching practices, she learned less in her home country. In her home country, she taught back-to-back classes with very limited or no space for teachers' reflection and discussions. She also said that she appreciated the space she has here in Christchurch, as she had more time to reflect and discuss teaching practices with other teachers. She also confirmed that this gave her time to prepare materials, mark students' work and discuss learning issues with students and teachers.

Her experience in private training establishments

Throughout the three interviews, Ruth clearly stated that PTEs present a different ESOL teaching workplace in relation to the work environment and students.

PTEs as a particular work context

When I asked her about ESOL teaching in PTEs in Christchurch and her home country, she stated that PTEs presented a unique teaching work context. She declared that teaching ESOL in PTEs can be perceived as a service like hotels and restaurants where teachers are supposed to meet their students' needs. She asserted:

Teaching is extremely dependant on the client, and it is absolutely a service; just like hotels.

Then she continued by explaining how ESOL teaching could be considered as a service. Firstly, she differentiated between two types of services or experiences which a paying client might receive. She explained:

If you go and get a massage, it is an experiential service which means that every step of the way has to be something enjoyable to you. And that is what you want; that is what you paid for. It is not a goal oriented service. Whereas if you get enrolled with a personal trainer with a teacher or a voice coach, that is a goal oriented service. You are paying them to get you to a goal. You are not paying them to please you every step of the way.

Teaching ESOL in her views, however still subject to customer satisfaction, is not supposed to focus only on satisfying students from the beginning to the end. In her views, ESOL teaching can be understood in the context of *reaching the destination can erase some pain felt through the journey*. However, I was wondering how this understanding of ESOL teaching as a service affected her professional practices and changed her own actual teaching techniques inside the classroom. She commented that thinking about her ultimate goal, which was getting her students to learn, directed her practice to teach for this specific purpose. In other words, she has been focusing on students' learning, and changed her teaching techniques and learning activities accordingly. She explained the relationship between this perception of teaching as service and her professional practices. She said:

If it is a goal oriented service, and my job is to get them to that goal. Then, my teaching is focused towards that goal, and my learning would change based on whether I am doing that effectively. So I have this goal, I am orienting my teaching on that goal, and if I am not making progress I have to change what is going on. So that would make me need to learn.

On several occasions, she highlighted her perception of students as paying clients as an advantage. She suggested that treating students as customers would not only affect the whole institution's procedures and guide policies, but change her individual teaching practices. She reported that when ESOL teaching context has business values such as customer care, this would have a positive impact on teachers' practices. The institution's management and teachers would work towards enhancing the overall professional practice to meet students' needs and expectations.

Ruth's perception of students in PTEs

When I asked her about her attitude towards valuing students and making sure that they were satisfied, she highlighted some reasons including her inner commitment to be a teacher who was responsible for their learning. She said:

When you are teaching in private language schools, not only you are supposed to teach your students and have them learn, but you need to please them and make them happy.

She wanted to make sure that her students were satisfied and her teaching was always directed to them and meant to be useful to them. She suggested that students should enjoy learning, and teaching should not be limited to enhancing their knowledge about language; it should be a pleasant experience. When I asked her about why she aimed to achieve students' satisfaction, she mentioned that her personal objective has always been to maintain her reputation as a good teacher among students by facilitating their learning, as learning was the students' ultimate goal, as well. She said:

They are private paying clients; they're not high school students. So I was very happy to be giving them what they wanted, and I personally also felt the class was more interesting because I was more engaged as a teacher.

However, she noted that her sense of commitment to achieve students' satisfaction should be accompanied by students' commitment. She affirmed that she was always engaged with them and pushed them to become engaged with learning, too. When I asked her what she has meant by students as paying clients, she enthusiastically said:

Definitely, they are paying clients, absolutely.

When I asked her to explain that further, she went on by explaining that PTEs as private entities aimed to achieve the highest margin of revenue, and the only paying group in this equation were students. Therefore, without students, these PTEs would not make any revenue. She also highlighted the fact that in PTEs, students are mostly self-funded adults who come to institutions with defined and pre-determined goals. When students are not given what they predetermined as goals, they may leave the institution, and this means a financial loss for these PTEs. She claimed:

You won't make money if you don't get students. And students will come when they know you do what they need and what they like.

When I asked her what she meant by students having specific goals to achieve, she commented that their goals varied. She also noted that, overall, the ultimate goal of students coming to any institution is improving their English language proficiency, and as a teacher she felt responsible to support students to achieve their goals. She explained:

These are adult-students and they get to determine what it is they are coming to achieve. If they are coming to the school because they are on holiday and they want to study for months for weeks, whatever. Their wants are what they need, they have got to define the terms.

In response to students' needs

On many occasions, Ruth shared stories with me about her attitude towards being responsive to students' needs in her classes. She observed students' engagement and level of satisfaction to the extent that she changed activities and sometimes the whole curriculum when they did not suit students' learning needs. She said:

When students were a little frustrated, I was frustrated, because it was not working. So my change was because I was energetic and I was pleased to be doing something that they had asked for.

She also added that it is not only teachers who should be responsible for students' satisfaction, but the institution management should have procedures on the ground to measure students' satisfaction. She described her work life experiences of how management can have a role in creating grounds for satisfaction among students. She stated that management of institutions should value students' satisfaction. She firmly said:

My current school certainly gets a lot of feedback on student satisfaction. Every five weeks students get a survey. They can just say how they satisfied and why. I think that is very necessary I think the communication always needs to go both ways

Then I asked her why she thought that teachers and institutions should value students' satisfaction, she replied that students' opinion in matters related to their learning should be valued and respected. She went on by confirming that private ESOL teaching relies heavily on students as customers. She explained:

It is a business if it is a private school. The school needs to realise that they are responsible to their customers and these customers are the students.

Being responsive, but reflective

During the first and the second interview, Ruth strongly supported the notion of ESOL as business. She said that borrowing the concepts of customer care values from private businesses, can enhance ESOL teaching quality. In the third interview, I raised these ideas again to deeply discuss and problematise the idea of being responsive to students as customers. I did this by comparing her expressed perceptions of students as customers to her own stories about being less responsive to students' wants. Especially, when she argued that these wants would not serve their academic goals and learning as students. She asserted:

You cannot always be responsive to their needs and wants; it has to be to some extent.

When I asked her to what extent she needed to be responsive to students' needs and wants, this led to a brief discussion of the meaning of students' needs and wants in the context of PTEs. She asserted that *needs* refer to students' academic needs from a teacher's perspective while *wants* can be what students might think are good for themselves. After that, she answered my question saying that when students come to an institution, they enrol to improve their language skills. Therefore, their needs and their wants are becoming similar to each other. She said:

I would say that student wants and student needs can be identical when coming to a private school like us, because they get to define what they want and if they say what they want so this is what they need.

Accepting students' needs and wants to be the same is not always the case in ESOL teaching. Therefore, I asked her to explain more how she viewed students' needs and wants as the same thing. Then she shared a story with me about a student who did not like her giving him feedback about his writing. At a specific stage, the student was unhappy with her comments on everything he wrote, as if she was undermining him intentionally. Then, I asked her if corrective comments were not what he wanted, why she insisted on doing this. She said probably her comments were not what he wanted at that moment, but his ultimate goal was to pass the course. She thought that it was her role to focus on his ultimate goal and academic needs to pass the course rather than responding to his momentarily wants. She asserted:

He asked me to improve his skills, so he can go to university. And I was doing it. It was in a way that he momentarily disagreed with me.

This brought the notion of students' needs versus their wants to the centre of our discussion. I asked her about her evaluation of the outcome of being responsive to students' academic needs regardless of their wants. She reported that she was able to guide his learning and support him to achieve his academic goals rather than following his momentary wants which would cost him failing the course. She firmly said:

Students absolutely cannot come and dictate your every move, because they will never reach their goals. They are paying a teacher as a professional to know how to reach their goals. And if they knew [*independently*] how to reach their goals, they would have done it themselves.

She also proposed that in this particular private post-school education context, students should not impose their ideas and momentarily feelings on teachers. Teachers are supposed to guide their learning, she noted. Proudly, she went on by saying that when the student realised that he passed the course because of her comments, which he had not liked at the beginning, he was thankful at the end. She explained:

He did have a defined goal. His goal was to pass the course to get his IELTS score and get to the university. Even at the moment, what I was doing [*corrections*] was momentarily unpleasant for him, I was still serving both his need and his want. Because his ultimate want was to go to university. [*In this context ESOL teaching*] is absolutely a service, because I was doing what he wanted. My job as a teacher is to improve his English to go to university. The thing is, he does not get to define how I meet that goal, but if I meet that goal, I have done my job.

She affirmed that she was serving his academic goals and his personal wants at the same time. She also noted that this is why she perceives ESOL teaching as a service. However, she suggested that she would know whether this technique might work successfully with this particular student, but not with others. She confirmed that pressure might result in a loss of confidence and motivation from the student's side, so she needed to balance pressure and encouragement.

When I asked her about how she would deal with students' complaints, especially, when they feel that their wants were not addressed, she went on by saying that she was always questioning students' requests and wants. In other words, she used to ask herself if the students were complaining because they were complainers. She wanted to give them what they wanted, but she was always keen on maintaining her teaching best practices. To explain how she rationalised her being responsive to students' needs and wants, she said:

I consider students' wants to a large extent but not fully. I am saying this because some students might complain and they complain because they are lazy, they do not want to do work. They do not understand what you are doing. I would certainly see what is in their feedback when I notice that it is legitimate. As a teacher, you always think if the students are complaining because they are complainers or they are lazy. My ultimate goal is that they learn.

Then she went on by evaluating her own professional practices in response to the issue of students' needs and wants. She confirmed that these suggested techniques were not always successful. Therefore, she applied this technique to different degrees with different students. This understanding of differences among students allowed her to maintain a flexible attitude towards students' needs and wants to keep them learning, she noted. She said:

You do still have to be aware as a teacher. You do not want to push them too hard, or be rude or be unpleasant all the way. If they are paying you to reach their ultimate goal, and you discourage them before they reach their goals, so you have failed.

In this particular situation, her understanding of being responsive to students' needs and wants implies accepting and interacting with the surrounding environment which considers institutional needs and values next to her own beliefs as a professional teacher.

Her views of PTEs and teacher professional practice

In this narrative, Ruth stated earlier that she was offered enough time and space to question her teaching practices in the two PTEs she worked for in Christchurch. She was able to talk to colleagues and observe other teachers, while in her home country she used to do back-to-back classes with no time for preparation or thinking of alternative teaching techniques. In the second interview, Ruth stated that this interaction with other teachers was facilitated by having

a shared office with other teachers but in her home country, there was no teachers' room. She said:

Classes were larger and the schedules were tighter. We had ten-minute breaks between every class, and we taught from nine to five with a half hour break for lunch and no planning time; that was bad for teachers. We had to sort classrooms, so there was barely enough time to sort your material, plan, and all these things. Also, there were no staffrooms. Teachers had nowhere to go to do anything they were either in the classroom or in the hallway with the students.

In the third interview, I chose to revisit the role which an institution can play in facilitating teachers' professional practice. She noted:

In order to learn you need time and space for contemplation. And you need time to prepare your materials and to go over things. Without that space, you are kind of forced to keep doing what you are doing because you have no time to revise it. [*In New Zealand*] I am very grateful for the space the teachers have. There are separate areas where they can talk amongst themselves. And that facilitates a lot of idea-sharing and problem-solving. They have time to schedule things and to plan things and make their lessons more effective and revise what they're doing; this is important. I still taught effectively [*in both contexts*], but I think I learned less [*back home*].

Ruth's evaluation of both teaching contexts implies that by utilising the offered space in Christchurch, she was able to change her classroom practices and become more responsive to the surrounding teaching context. Although she was satisfied with the way she taught in both contexts, she confirmed that her learning about teaching was much more effective in Christchurch compared to her home country. When she stated that she was satisfied with her performance as a teacher under the lack of time and resources to develop professionally, this could mean that there were not enough practical models of practice to challenge her performance as a teacher.

Management role in teachers' professional learning

The role that institutions and management play in teachers' professional practice was discussed in two interviews. On many occasions, Ruth said that she had been engaged in some PLD sessions that were offered by the institution's management as a reaction to teachers' learning needs and the institution's policies. When I asked her about her experience of being engaged in these PLD sessions, she noted:

They [*the institution managers*] had a whole tutorial on how to write feedback on a report card. So if you are writing a report on students' progress explaining how they did, it was on how to do that. It was an excellent tutorial and I learned a lot, and I am still using that method today. They also taught me how to write a lesson plan, and that was beneficial, so I kept that when I moved on

However, she argued that some of the materials in these PLD sessions were outdated, as they were one-size-fits-all learning activities. She thought that she had different professional learning needs, and she expected these PLD activities to be designed to differentiate between various teaching issues and teachers' needs. She explained:

The school has some PLD sessions. There is an issue with that; these sessions are for all the teachers, while teachers at any time are facing different issues or learning needs. It can be hit or miss. Maybe one out of every five PLD sessions is useful to you.

She also shared the story with me of when she attended an induction PLD programme, and she was asked to abide by the requirements of the institution. She reported that she worked for a huge school, with six hundred campuses around the country. She was asked to attend a series of online PLD sessions before working with them, and complete tasks based on her learning. Sometimes she was offered to choose from a range of sessions, and there were many obligatory ones. She enjoyed that, but she thought there are drawbacks. She commented:

Unfortunately the material was a little bit outdated, it was there just because they were behind, and they need to be updated on content.

I asked her to walk me through an experience when PLD content needed an update, she reported that once she was asked to write learning objectives on the board at the beginning of every class as part of the institution's policy. She said she could not understand the benefit of doing

this and they had not provided a teaching theory which supports their claims. However, she had to do it to avoid clashes with her managers. She remembered her initial attitude:

I did it every single class because it was one of the requirements of the school. If the manager walks in the room, and I did not have them on the board, then it is a big problem. But there was no benefit to it.

On the contrary, she changed her mind after she left that institution. She had the chance to observe another teacher who not only wrote these learning objectives on the board, but also explained them to the students. She explained:

I observed a teacher, and she not only put the plan on the board. In order to start the class, she would say, “ok today we are going to do this, and the reason we are doing this is this, and then we are going to go here, and then this develops. I noticed you have a problem with these issues so if you have time we will go through that.” It was very effective.

She learned how these learning objectives could show how the teacher is honouring her students by explaining the teaching plan. After that incident, she went back to the habit of writing the learning objectives on the board and explaining them to her students as a roadmap of that specific lesson. Ruth noted that change in her practice was better facilitated by observing successful experiences rather than receiving direct orders from managers.

Her learning pathways in response to her work context

Ruth said that she has always been driven by what the work context offered. CELTA (Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults) was the only formal teacher education she had, but the rest of her learning about teaching came from informal pathways which seemed to be associated with the context of private ESOL teaching. She said:

People who say learning only comes from formal courses are mistaken. I have very little formal training. What is not covered by my formal training which is just a month of CELTA course, so everything else was informal; it's quite a lot. Outside of the classroom I learned from, I guess reading grammar books, discussions with colleagues and my discussions with my family.

She learned informally most of the time and in different ways; she went on to elaborate that while formal training gave her knowledge about lesson planning and classroom management

techniques, she accepted these as merely tools. However, she believes that, as an individual, the way she used these tools was the outcome of her informal learning and interaction with the surrounding work environment. She said:

You are built of your practices, your experiences in your life, and your background. If you give the exact same text-book and the exact same lesson plans to five teachers, you are going to have wildly different five lessons; they are different people.

I asked her to talk to me about how she believes ESOL teachers in PTEs learn, Ruth said that informal learning shaped the largest amount of her professional learning practices. She shared several stories with me when she learned much by interacting with grammar books, observing other teachers, and utilising her knowledge about mediation acquired from family members. She asserted:

You live in teaching twenty-four-seven, and you attend a formal training course for a very small portion. Everything about you, your life, your experiences is going to inform your teaching. This is what builds me as a teacher.

Maintaining continuous informal learning

When I asked her to talk about her learning about ESOL teaching, she responded that she also learned from informal professional learning activities such as teachers' PLD sessions which have been available within the workplace. She said:

I think informal courses or personal development sessions are more useful. Personal development sessions like in-house learning activities for teachers are relevant.

I asked about the nature of in-house professional learning sessions offered to teachers, and how they could be effective for her. Then she asserted that she preferred these in-house sessions, as they were more directed to teachers' needs rather than bringing external speakers to overwhelm teachers with unnecessary practices at times. She noted:

They should not be prescribed and formal all the time. This is neglecting all the informal learning. So if you fill up all teachers' time with those formal training, it bugs them down with a lot of facts that may or may not

be relevant to them. And you need to give the teacher room to address their specific problems. Formal courses, conferences or professional development sessions are good, they should be there, but they are more generic, meaning trying to cater to a wider audience. So what you learn might not be applicable [*to your particular classroom*].

She stated that she prefers to be engaged in autonomous and self-learning activities more than learning in pre-determined group structures. Learning in a structured programme has not allowed her to be part of decision making. She could not decide on the content or objectives of these learning activities. She perceived being included in decision making as an essential element in her professional learning. She explained:

That is not possible in a group setting, because everybody has different issues. In informal learning, the teacher is the agent because it is self-learning, self-teaching. And I think that informal self-learning or self-teaching is specific and specific [*to teachers' work lives*] to whatever is going on.

When I asked her about how often she has been engaged in professional learning activities, she said repeatedly it has to be an ongoing process.

I will not stop learning and figuring out answers. It is definitely a continued process. You never get it done.

I wanted to know whether she had advised other teachers to adopt the same attitude towards professional learning she said:

I personally learn individually, and I would recommend it to other teachers.

After that, I asked her how that attitude towards professional learning affected her teaching practices and career development. She said that she started her career as a casual teacher, and was promoted many times in different institutions as she worked hard on her professional learning. She described the impact of her PLD attitude on her career, saying:

This learning attitude has dramatically affected my career development. Learning was part of it, it was my supervisors who saw that I took it seriously, and I put a lot of effort into my classes.

In response to my question about whether professional learning supported her job satisfaction and job security, she said that her learning was the pathway to secure promotions and taking better positions at work. She commented

I am so satisfied with my job. I love it. And if I did not put the effort into it would not be as fun. So learning teaching planning is essential to be happy as a teacher. And so I discovered that, and I am very happy now. Also, if I had not put that amount of effort, I would stay on a temporary contract, and not as stable as I am now.

She also said that, at an early stage of her career, she was determined to keep this informal professional learning going on. She affirmed that the option of taking charge of her professional learning and managing change in her teaching practices was not always available. She described one of her hard past experiences saying

You know sometimes there is a culture in a school where a teacher who rocks in, ten minutes before class, fifteen minutes after the class, then leaves; which really is not enough time to do anything properly. And I tried that out for a while because that was the culture, it was miserable. Because you never know what was going on in class. You are not tailoring to the students' needs. You are not prepared enough, this just makes teaching sad and terrible.

Consequently, she believes that as soon as she has had the chance to practice in-service professional learning, she managed to take her teaching and professionalism to another level. She noted that she made use of every possible professional learning chance by getting properly engaged with the surrounding work context.

Observing other teachers

Another informal learning pathway which Ruth adopted was observing other teachers. She asserted that her observation of other teachers changed her classroom practices on many occasions. When I asked her to walk me through one of her learning experiences, she said a good example of this was her experience of writing the learning objectives on the board. She noted that she was told to write the lesson learning objectives on the board at the beginning of each class as part of the institution policy. Since she affirmed that it was useless, she stopped doing this as soon as she left that particular institution. Nevertheless, when she observed

another teacher doing this in a professional manner, she decided to replicate this in her class. She said that she saw the other teacher explaining the learning objectives to students rather than just writing them on the board.

She perceived this as a part of honouring the students and showing them that the teacher was well prepared and getting students engaged in decision making about the content of the class. She concluded that it was important for her to see other teaching practices which guided real and effective change in her own teaching practices. She said:

I think it's important to watch other teachers, because you can go into a classroom watching another teacher, and seeing him teaching a lesson and go, "Oh wow, you know, my lessons were way more effective". Or "well, this class was really engaged so I can learn from that", or "this class had a lot of fun." I think it is very important to be exposed to a lot of different teaching methods and styles, situations as well, courses. Yeah, so I think the more exposure you get the more balanced you having things.

When I asked her why she thought observing other teachers informed her practices, she said that she needed to watch a variety of teaching styles to be able to form her own character as a teacher. When she observes other teachers she learns good techniques to transfer to her classes, and tries to avoid what she previewed as wrong practices. She continued by saying that she did not apply other teachers' techniques in her class before questioning them and test their suitability to her students' age and level as well:

To learn teaching you have to observe teaching. You do not see it, you do not know what it is. I think it is a good practical model. However, you can go and see a situation that, one of those points would not be as effective for your students, you feel like, oh I am doing the right thing.

Talking to colleagues and family members

Next to observing other teachers and being observed, Ruth perceived informal discussions with colleagues and family members as a pathway to achieve professional learning and development. She confirmed that she has been always talking to her co-teachers about classroom issues. She shared a story with me about when some students had communication issues amongst each other; one student complained to her about being harassed by another student through text messages. In this particular incident, Ruth said that her decisions were

informed by her experience in mediation drawing on her family expertise as they are psychotherapists. She also stated that she was informally trained on mediation procedures. She said:

I have been trained in mediation informally through my university education and through my family; they are all therapists, or many of them are. So, I just have a sense of how to deal with these things. I did not know the academic steps to take, or the administrative steps to take. Absolutely there are administrative steps, *within the institution*, that need to be taken in these issues.

Although she confirmed that she was aware of administrative consultation within the institution for such cases, she chose to rely on her own experiences before referring the case to the institution's administration staff. She thought she was able to contribute towards solving the problem, as she has gained experience in mediation by talking to her family members.

On a different occasion, when she had issues with the curriculum and students' engagement, she confirmed that she chose to talk to colleagues and academic managers. She reported that she utilised colleagues' talk and advice as the main sources which informed her practices. She also noted that when she needed to learn something new about a specific technical writing matter, she first approached co-teachers, had a conference with them, and figured out all the answers for her questions about academic writing techniques. She said:

The day it did not work, I start talking to my students in the class. Then, I left the class and spoke to my boss and the teacher manager. After, that, in the teachers' room I said "Look this class is not working." I explained why, and I explained what I talked to my students about and I explained what their feedback was. Then my manager came and said, "Oh yeah you know, we want classes to work and if you are feeling you can improve it, then go ahead." He also said, "I have much of these resources as well." He gave me a bunch of more resources. Then he said, "whatever you come up with, if students are happy with it and they are learning, and it meets the objectives so we will be happy."

She continued by talking about interacting with colleagues as a chance to learn about teaching and at the same time observe different learning models. She affirmed that teachers, as individuals, learn differently and might have different attitudes towards learning the same

thing. When I asked her to walk me through an experience when she managed to enhance her learning techniques by observing other teachers learn about ESOL teaching, she shared with me the story of talking to a colleague about a teaching issue. Then, her colleague went that night and collected information about that issue from different university websites. She said that she had not tried this learning technique until she observed her colleague following this model. She elaborated, saying:

Teachers may have a specific ESL website that they go to, they also go and watch YouTube videos. I saw someone else modelling this behaviour, now I know that is an option, a beneficial option, and intrigued me. So if I ever come up with a question like that again, I might do the same thing she did. I think the best part of talking to another teacher is that they model behaviours of learning that you may have not thought of. So everybody has a resource that they go to and I might forget about one, having other people model how they deal with problems open possibilities for me.

Ruth described the interaction with colleagues as a win-win process. At the same time she asked colleagues to help her with classroom issues, she also shared her successful teaching experiences with other teachers. When I asked her about how other teachers perceive her suggestions. She said:

Sometimes they say, “Oh thank you for that, it worked out well. But we were stuck on this problem because students were confused about this, or that.” Or they will say, “We didn't end up doing that because that teaching point was irrelevant to the lesson.” I do not even know, but it depends on their class and their students.

While some teachers took her ideas and applied them in their classes as they were relevant to them, other teachers get back to her and report unsuccessful trials to apply her teaching techniques to their classes, she noted. She also said that some teachers needed to change these teaching practices to suit their students' needs or teaching philosophy.

Utilising past experience

In the third interview, I asked her to remind me of the professional learning sources which we talked about before, she noted reading books and talking to colleagues and added exposure. I asked her to clarify what she meant by exposure, she said:

Just through exposure, you learn because you get a textbook and you open it up and you say, “Wow I did know this before.” You can learn from exposure to textbooks.

She shared a story with me about when she taught a course about idioms and slang in American English which she thought that her students were not benefiting from at all. As a result, she decided to change all the teaching material, and created more suitable and enjoyable teaching material for students. When I asked her about how she made decisions to change learning material, she said that next to the support she got from the institution management, she was informed by her past experience.

It was rough, and finally I just said ok guys we need to stop. I stopped in the middle of the class, and I said this is clearly not working. I said we are going to figure it out, why it is not working; what can be more effective?

She said that she quickly realised that this would not work with this particular group of students. When I asked her how she reached this conclusion she said that her past experiences taught her to measure whether things are effective by measuring the simplicity of activities and measure it against students’ understanding and see if they could produce the language.

She went on to say that past experience and trial and error attempts in the classroom usually draw on the wide range of course books with which she had taught before. She said that she taught with a wide range of course books which gave her the experience and ability to evaluate activities and anticipate whether they are going to work for students or not.

As well as past exposure to teaching material which had broaden her experience, Ruth’s work life included exposure to various types, nationalities and levels of students. She said that accumulative experience with different students’ nationalities and backgrounds allowed her to have confidence in handling various students’ needs and learning issues. When I asked her to what extent she managed to repeat successful practices, she said that when she has an issue, she thinks about a time in the past when she has had the same level of students, same age, and same teaching circumstances. Then, she makes decisions on how to deal with this issue. She importantly added that she does not take past experiences and practices for granted. She always measures past practices against current students’ situations. If students learn, engage, and are happy that means she had made a rational choice to repeat past practices. She proudly said:

Teaching one tough class after another tough class, I can handle anything. Because I taught this many times, the different student population will have different problems. I think I have grown as a teacher; when you teach the same thing again and again, you develop a system.

Her professional learning philosophy

At the end of the third and last interview with Ruth, I raised the issue of how teachers acquire learning skills and nourish them. She answered:

Well, hopefully you learn learning skills when you are a child at school, so I think that once you become a teacher you are already equipped with the skills to learn. The reason I say that is because if you have become a teacher, presumably you are interested in learning, and presumably you put at least a little bit of effort into learning in the past otherwise you would have been able to become a teacher. I feel like before you become I am curious, I keep these skills of learning.

Teachers must have been exposed to learning since their time of being students she noted. When teachers make the decision to start their teaching careers, this is because they are interested in learning and how learning happens, she added. Then, I asked her whether this makes all teachers learn the same way and at the same pacing, and she replied that teachers are not different from students when it comes to learning; their learning varies as they are different individuals.

Being reflective and selective

When we talked about how Ruth views ESOL teaching and how she keeps up ongoing professional learning, she shared multiple stories with me which show her ability to think critically, take decisions and make choices which allow her to maintain quality teaching. For example, she once said that she had the habit of adopting a student-centred approach by asking students about their expectations in the first lesson and amending the course content accordingly. This had changed when she taught one group of students who seemed unfamiliar with the teacher asking them what they want to study. She said:

Some students want the teacher to tell them what to do, and vice versa will lessen the students' confidence in the teacher's abilities.

She went on to say that some students come to the class and expect their teacher to tell them the learning objectives of the lesson rather than asking them. When I asked her how she dealt with this issue, she said that she decided to change her classroom practices and provided students with pre-determined learning objectives with a narrow margin for their input.

Another anecdote in which Ruth critically viewed her own attitude towards classroom issues and made practice-informed decisions was when she was instructed to write the learning objectives on the board. However, she stopped this teaching practice when she got a chance to do this. Accidentally, she was later allowed to observe another teacher using learning objectives in a more purposeful manner. She stated that she decided to follow that teacher teaching practices. She explained this experience saying:

It was verbal not just a visual plan on the board. And it was such a kind of enlightening thing to see, because it was clear that she was one organised and she knew what is going on. And she also explained why we are doing things.

When I asked her to talk more about this experience, she said that she could not apply this to her teaching practice before understanding its value to students. Ruth was able to think critically about students' engagement with these learning objectives, and managed to figure out the rationale behind the other teacher's effective use of learning objectives on the board. At the same time, she took the decision to start writing them again on the board. She said:

It was kind of a way of honouring students say hey I do not just arbitrarily choose what to do. I observe you, I see the problems, and we are going to address them. And here is the one we are dealing with today. And so it was very effective and I have been doing this since then.

Ruth also reported that she was selective when she went online. She said when she is in doubt about a specific piece of information, she checks it through various online resources. She said that she understands the nature of online material and how important is being selective in this context. She explained:

In terms of trust, it is very obvious that the internet is not perfect and people on forums disagree all the time. If I am not quite sure about an answer, I will definitely check it through different sources, and I will always default to the official sources. Another quality of online learning is that it had

various options for teachers to learn and verify unclear areas. There are always a variety of resources that teachers have immediate access to them, and this makes verifying information easier. Accessing a bunch of resources.

Being creative

In the third interview, I chose to revisit Ruth's story about when she decided to change the teaching material to suit students' needs, she commented that she decided to come up with a few ideas which allowed her to bring about this change swiftly and successfully. When I asked her to elaborate more on this experience, she said that first, she asked all the students to complete a survey on how they preferred to study. Then, she talked to her managers who permitted her to do the necessary changes and gave her a few supporting learning materials to use in the classroom. After that, she agreed with all the students on changing the content of the class to a movie-based class where students were allowed to watch movies and get engaged in discussions based on topics from the movies or short videos. When I asked her how she evaluated this change, she reported that the level of students' participation increased and the students were much happier attending her classes. She explained:

I started a whole new approach and completely changed the approach of the class. Previously we were doing vocabulary worksheets and little exercises with them. We changed to be a movie based class, where we spend two weeks going through one movie step-by-step and analyse it in terms of language and then practising using the language; this went over very well.

As we continued by talking about reacting to the teaching context with novel ideas, she brought to the second interview an activity that she used with her students; an artefact from classroom practices which she developed to meet students' needs. She reported that it involved a group of teenagers, and they were supposed to spend around two hours learning the only vocabulary. She thought that they would not cope with the course level or get engaged; students were not learning, and were totally bored. Ruth went on describing this activity, saying:

I developed this technique out of necessity. It was a week or two, and I had a group of sixteen-year-old Chinese boys. I had to teach them for four hours in a row every day only vocabulary. It was really weird, and it was a summer programme. It was awful, especially as they were sixteen-year-

old boys and their vocabulary was, I would say, Low-intermediate. They could understand basic things but they could not engage enough. The material I was giving them was quite dull, it was only vocabulary drills and they were not topic based. We were struggling.

She went on to say that there was no one to talk to, the school was not cooperative. She decided to change the classroom style and the teaching activities. She made it into activities of creating sentences. She developed a worksheet to allow students to use the words in sentences. She also designed an exercise which allowed students to compete and collaborate while learning unconsciously. She said:

It's an exercise that has competitiveness built into it and they feel motivated. It has collaboration so they have to work with a partner, and it also enforces proofreading self-correction because I will simply circle the parts that are wrong and ask them to get back and correct them. This is forced them they look through the textbook to try to find answers, it also feels time urgency.

Professional practices in Ruth's work life

Ruth reported incidents of going on her own to learn about classroom issues, and simultaneously discussing her findings and practices with colleagues, managers, students and family members. She has been practising professional learning individually and showed a sensible approach to the surrounding society.

Individual initiatives

On several occasions, Ruth stated that most of her professional learning should be autonomous. She stated clearly that teachers can initiate learning opportunities individually and lead the development of these activities. She argued that as an individual, she has become more informed about the teaching context and work environment than outsiders would be, stating:

No one can spoon feed you your learning, because they do not know what is going on. Only you know what it is. You can respond to your situation.

In the middle of our discussion about her ability to individually maintain ongoing learning and lead learning activities, she highlighted teachers' talk and working collaboratively with students and management among pathways through which she examined the outcome of her PLD practices. After highlighting collaborative learning in both the first and the second

interviews, I decided to ask her whether she prefers to work solely or collaboratively to learn about ESOL teaching, she replied firmly that both are important. When I questioned her activity of reading grammar books as a solo learning activity, she argued that reading books is another way of interacting with their authors' ideas which is not a solo learning activity in her views. She said:

I disagree because you are getting input from a grammar book. The grammar book has an author and also has a specific approach to grammar, so while you are not working with a teacher, you are working with an outside source. This will have input to your teaching. Absolutely, because the way that I was presenting grammar may be different from the way that the author presented grammar. Now, we have two approaches and when you combine you can bring up the best of these approaches for the particular students' population that you are teaching.

Engagement in collaborative learning

Ruth shared some stories with me about her learning experiences as an individual learner such as when she made decisions about course material adaptation and curriculum change individually. However, some of these decisions were accompanied by collaborative work with colleagues and academic managers. In other words, to change the teaching material, she made an individual decision which was followed by consulting colleagues and managers in the same institution. Asking her about the impact of talking to colleagues and managers, she said that she asks her colleagues for ideas, or observes their classrooms to learn new practices. She affirmed:

Talking to different teachers reveals what they are doing to learn. Sometimes it is a thing I have already thought of, and sometimes they are wildly different things that I never thought of. Absolutely it is essential. You are one person with your one experience. That is how people learn in the first place. You can learn by your singular only experience, but that is just one, but if you talk to other people you are drawing on experience from dozens of other people, you have just become greatly more effective, and you learn more.

When Ruth talked about learning with others, she has also highlighted learning from others. On more than one occasion she shared stories with me about learning from colleagues'

experiences, students' talk, and family discussions. She shared stories about times when she collaborated with her students to come up with effective teaching activities. She said that she had to teach a course of idioms and her students were bored with the course and most of them were not engaged. Then she decided to ask them to complete a survey about their own learning objectives. She noted that after reviewing the survey she changed the teaching materials. Her students were much more engaged and she noted that she learned the importance of involving students in decision making.

On the contrary side, Ruth shared with me stories about workplaces where collaborative work hardly existed. She said that in some schools teachers guarded their material and wanted to keep it exclusively for themselves. She explained:

When we share with each other, we get success from sharing with each other. Then it builds the culture of sharing, and I think this is very important. I have worked at schools where there are fewer resources, meaning you have to make up your resources. The course books would say *learn that*, but they give no resources for it. I worked for schools where teachers guarded their material furiously, and refused to share because that was their material, and it was their thing and they wanted to be special and they wanted to keep it. Sometimes we had shared drives on the computer, and if you came across a worksheet and used it, and other teachers found out that you used their worksheet, they will get quite angry. I thought that it was not very conducive to effective teaching.

“I want to be a good teacher”

Throughout the three interviews, it was obvious that Ruth gave much attention to her students, her performance, and her own development as a teacher. She also shared stories with me about when she acted like a sensible teacher in response to her students and institutional needs. She talked about the importance of observing the teaching practices of herself and others, reflecting on them, learning and bettering her own teaching practices. When I asked her about the reason why she did all that, her simple and direct answer was:

I want to be a good teacher.

I asked her twice, in two separate interviews, to comment on this statement. She responded with different statements. In one interview, she talked about the way she perceived her moral

responsibility as an effective teacher, and on a different occasion, she considered how the surrounding teaching context viewed her or should view her teaching skills. This mixture of influences which shaped and reshaped her own sense of being a teacher was obvious throughout her responses in the three interviews. When I asked her whether she believes that being committed to her inner sense of being a teacher is a common thing among all teachers, she enthusiastically commented:

That might be different from other teachers. Some people thought of it as it merely works.

Teaching beyond the classroom

Ruth affirmed that teaching is not just a routine in her life that she had to follow; she referred to teaching as her passion. She was always keen on extending the image of a teacher to what was beyond teaching and classroom walls. She shared a story with me about helping one of the students to sort out an issue with another student who used to send her annoying messages outside the institution. She explained further that she needed to take care of her students and make sure that they are engaged and enjoying learning. She noted:

I do not view teaching as just my job, it is my passion and my role in life.
I am a teacher whether I am teaching at school or not. It is just kind of part of my identity

She highlighted the intrinsic motivation and what “self” as a teacher meant to her, giving an example of the time she decided to stop teaching in the middle of the class and changed the whole teaching material and class style as soon as she realised that students were not engaged. She commented:

I wanted my class to work. When you are a teacher and what you are doing does not work. This is just miserable. I like to be useful and have my students be happy.

She stated another reason for considering teaching as a role in life when she said that observing herself acting like a skilful teacher and having successful experiences have increased her self-satisfaction. She said:

I gain a lot of satisfaction from being an effective and good teacher.

I asked her to elaborate on what a good teacher means to her, she replied that she wanted to see her students performing well, engaged, happy and learning. She formulated her understanding and appreciation of her identity as a teacher in a few ways including measuring her students' satisfaction. Not only self-satisfaction she reported, but she also talked about her being fully satisfied with her career development and job security. She asserted:

I can see results of my students, having a pleasant time, engaged and learning. It means a lot to me to be a good teacher.

In this context, Ruth stated that she needs to interact with the private teaching environment which caters for students' needs inside and outside the classroom. This constructs one aspect of her inner sense of being a good teacher.

Awareness of professional progress

When we had further discussions about her inner sense of being a teacher, Ruth talked about it being not only students' feedback which constructed her understanding of being a teacher. She said that she was always aware of and observed progress happening in her ability to demonstrate best teaching practices. She noted that she noticed the continuous development in her skills as a teacher. She explained:

I think I have grown as a teacher. Well, it depends. When you teach the same thing over and over again you develop a system that works. And you can revise each time, so there are certainly things that I know I kind of have in my mental repertoire. That I can pull out easily and that is useful. I mean for example, if it is your first time teaching a grammar point, you may know it as a native speaker, but you don't know how to effectively explain it. And once you try and get something right and something difficult for students. Then, you can revise it. And after a while you have written it down, so you know the most efficient way to present it, to give examples, to have them [*students*] practice it. And it just becomes easier.

This gave her enthusiasm and self-confidence to continue developing as a teacher. She stated that she gained confidence by modifying teaching practices, trying them with students, and watching them facilitate students' learning.

On a different occasion, I asked her about how she maintained a good level of observing her own progress and professional development. She answered that watching other teachers teaching enhanced her awareness of her own teaching skills. She noted:

You can go into a classroom watching another teacher, and seeing him teaching a lesson and go, oh wow, you know my lessons were way more effective.

Awareness of cultural and political influences

Continuing to talk about her being a teacher, I asked her why she always wanted to be a good teacher. She noted that in addition to her personal interest in teaching, she was always keen to have the reputation of a good teacher among students, colleagues, and in the eyes of her managers. When I worked with Ruth in the same PTE, I saw her keen to build professional relationships with colleagues and managers. She was always keen to build this image of professionalism and effectiveness by hard work. When I asked her about why she wanted to build this image of a good and skilful teacher, she enthusiastically said:

I want my school and my manager to know that I am doing well. I am worth their money, because they paid me to teach. And I want the students to know the class worth their money. There are professional standards, and I have to keep my standards.

PTEs as private institutions invest their money in teachers and Ruth affirmed that she should offer them what they have recruited her for which is quality teaching. Ruth's understanding of the profession was affected not only by her inner sense of responsibility, but also by the surrounding interrelated influences such as students, colleagues and the institution's management.

Leading professional learning

When we talked about her attitude towards teaching ESOL as a profession, she argued that she affirmed that her character as a teacher was built by many influences inside and outside the institution. She also referred to the fact that her learning was continuous and mainly informal. When I asked her about who guided her learning and professional development. She stated that teachers should not wait for others to spoon feed them their learning practices. She said:

You know what you should do!

This sense of self-confidence is necessary and comes as a result of the surrounding private teaching context. She asserted repeatedly that it was necessary for her to take charge of her professional learning and have the lead in feeding change into her teaching practices. When I asked her to walk me through an experience when she took the lead in professional learning, she replied that she made decisions to change her actual practices and insisted on embracing these practices inside the classroom. Then she revisited the story of the student who was not satisfied with her comments on his writing. She said:

My job as a teacher is to improve his English to go to university. The thing is, he does not get to define how I meet that goal, but if I meet that goal, I have done my job.

She perceived that she decided to take the lead and responsibility in this case, as she knew from past experience that he would not pass the course unless he takes her suggestions on board and considers her feedback seriously.

She also asserted that another reason why she decided to take charge of improving her own professional practice is that she always wanted to keep her professional standards as a teacher. She concluded:

Because I am a teacher, I am on the teaching end of the business. I do think what you just said is applicable to the administration, the administration goal is to keep the student in the school as long as possible, and so they make money. The teacher's goal is to meet the students' needs [*academic needs*], so the teacher is not interested in prolonging the student's stay. I think these are the objectives of the two sides of the business [*teachers and administration*].

Key themes that emerge

Ruth's experience, an ESOL teacher who taught only in PTEs in New Zealand as well as her home country, has conveyed consistent messages about ESOL teachers' work lives and practices in private post-school institutions. Like other participants, her workplace practices show how PTEs are particular work contexts. In other case studies, I discussed tensions between the business model of ESOL and educational values, how teachers cope with work life constraints, and collaborative learning. Ruth's story adds to my understanding of the

dynamics of these aspects of ESOL teachers' professional practices. While reading the narrative of Ruth, the following themes emerge.

ESOL business: The business model tensions

One key theme which emerged from Ruth's narrative is the business model of ESOL teaching. Ruth's narrative discusses the ESOL business model and illustrates its impact on students as well as teachers. Her ideas and stories revealed how she perceived her own role and contributions towards achieving the institutional business goals. Overall, Ruth's narrative described ESOL teaching as a goal-oriented service which is offered to paying clients and requires flexible and innovative professional practices from teachers who adopt autonomous professional learning pathways.

Ruth's perception of ESOL teaching as a service which is similar to hotels and restaurants added to the understanding of how business values could coat ESOL teaching in private institutions in Christchurch. Firstly, she suggests differentiating between two types of services in order to make clear her views of ESOL as a service. She named these two types as *experiential* service and *goal-oriented* service. On the one hand, Ruth described experiential service as an experience where customers have expectations to be pleased and satisfied from the beginning to the end, and she used massage service as an example. On the other hand, she referred to goal-oriented service as a service in which always satisfying customers might not be prioritised and more focus is on the outcome of the process such as hiring a personal trainer or joining an ESOL course. She affirmed that, in ESOL teaching, supporting students' progress to reach their academic goals can erase some pain felt through this journey of learning. Some literature of psychology and sociocultural studies such as a study conducted in Singapore studying a group of adolescent students (Caleon et al., 2017) which examined gratitude and relatedness among students with parents, teachers and peers showed that students were thankful and stayed related to parents and peers in comparison with their teachers. Other studies (Gu & Day, 2013; Howard & Johnson, 2004) proposed the notion of teaching as one of the professions which might not be appreciated until after some time of completion. Students might not be thankful for their teachers' work during their study time, but they sometimes only value their efforts when they finish their studies. This does not allow teachers to see gratitude in their students' eyes and behaviours all the time. This concurs with Ruth's ideas that students might have some pain while learning, but they would forget this when they achieve their learning goals and teachers should continue to do their work regardless.

Other researchers (Hase & Kenyon, 2000; Knowles, 1980; Sharan B Merriam, 2001, 2018) maintain that post-school institutions deal with adult learners who are supposed to be determined and goal-driven students who come to PTEs with pre-determined goals and have a vision of how to achieve them. Although Ruth's experiences acknowledge adult students' autonomy, she has highlighted the teacher role in supporting them in dealing with disruptions as an essential part of goal-oriented service providing. She stated that understudying load, some students might easily drift from their learning goals and get overwhelmed by tasks to the point that they lose their interest in learning and allow distractions to hold them back from achieving academic plans.

Nevertheless Ruth argued that students as goal-oriented customers should not expect to enjoy every step of their learning, this might not fully describe the institutional policy. Recently, ESOL institutions, including the exact institution Ruth worked for, have been promoting themselves as *Fun Learning* environments as they realise that one of the valid students' worries is the academic burden. In addition to that, Ruth implied that the customers of other goal-oriented service providers such as personal trainers do not expect to enjoy every moment of their experience under their supervision. However, personal trainers still apply customer service principles which represent unpleasant moments as motivational challenges in order to keep their customers motivated and attract potential ones.

Ruth's understanding of tensions associated with private ESOL teaching reveals teacher professional practice as socially situated. According to her experience, teacher professional practice should be viewed within the surrounding social aspects such as students' age, study aims and their future goals. Her ideas in this regard resonated with other researchers. For example, while trying to answer questions such as whether teaching methodology is a science or an art, a matter of the head or the heart, in his reflections on tertiary teachers' professional practice in New Zealand the researcher Ruth (2014) wrote:

Teaching in higher education is a social practice, a political and ideological enterprise. It is a relational activity that rests on a complex contract between people that entails substantial assumptions about a self.

The researcher Ruth's ideas about education as a relational activity presents the basis for Ruth the participant's ideas about the teacher role in sorting out the tensions which surround and might hinder private tertiary students' learning.

This adds more pressure on teachers' shoulders to juggle with various aspects at the same time. I decided to take this argument to the third interview with Ruth. In response to this, Ruth stressed the notion that teachers should utilise their knowledge and experience in ESOL teaching to guide students' learning in a balanced manner. This balance allows students to stay focused on their academic goals without losing their enthusiasm or motivation due to study load or teachers' pressure. She also raised another important issue of when students are worn out they might leave the course which means a financial loss for the institution and might also affect teachers' careers. In conclusion, Ruth asserted that a balanced attitude, combining business rules and educational values, is required for ESOL teachers in private post-school institutions.

Students as paying clients

Another key aspect of the business model of ESOL teaching is Ruth's perception of students as paying clients. Like other participants, Mary, Sensei and Paula Silva, Ruth raised the issue of dealing with ESOL students as paying customers. However, she took the side of accepting it and living with it rather than criticising it. She stated clearly that teachers should please students and make their learning journey as pleasant as possible. Ruth made it part of her professional satisfaction to provide students with what they needed and make sure that her lessons were worth their money and investment in learning. She also stated her responsibility towards achieving the institutional goals including maintaining a good reputation among students and making a financial profit. Walker (2014) highlighted the tensions teachers face while trying to turn a profit to PTE owners and adhere to professional and ethical standards. In her narrative, Ruth realised the relationship between students' payments and private teaching sustainability, and accepted her role in maintaining this balance of meeting her responsibility to these students as private paying customers.

Accepting students as private paying clients has encouraged Ruth to teach to the best of her standards, but has not stopped her from questioning their demands. She stated that she used to measure their needs and wants against her understanding of teaching principles, and she had the courage to reject their immediate wants which she thought less helpful. Despite students' complaints, she took the initiative and responsibility to prioritise their actual learning goals on their wants; this attitude towards teaching required specific professional practices and learning pathways.

Adopting specific learning pathways

Ruth's narrative shows the wide range of learning pathways Ruth chose to adopt in order to be able to cope with the dual nature of private post-school ESOL teaching. Hunter and Kiely (2016) investigated teachers' professional development options and identified two broad approaches which included an informing approach which largely relies on educating teachers about learning theories, and another responsive approach which draws on teachers' beliefs, assumptions and reflection. They also perceived that the informing approach which relies on spoonfeeding teachers what to do was proved to have a limited impact on teacher ongoing learning and actual teaching practices, while the responsive approach encourages teachers to adopt a reflective attitude and values their cognition and action-research findings (p. 38).

Ruth's narrative shows she adopts a more informal or responsive rather than a formal or informing one. Although she stated that she made the best out of each formal learning opportunity at work, such as PLD sessions, and formal teacher training courses, such as CELTA, she confirmed that most of her learning about ESOL teaching came from informal or responsive pathways. Ruth reported that she has adopted an individual learning approach by reading books and surfing the internet for teachers' discussions and forums. Simultaneously she has been engaged in collaborative learning by consulting her managers, observing other teachers and discussing classroom issues with students. This variety of learning sources resulted from her continuous engagement with the surrounding society as well as a lack of systematic institution-led learning opportunities.

Ruth's choice to get engaged in informal learning seems to have been mainly driven by necessity and her own curiosity. While she scarcely talked about in-house systematic learning, she noted that most of her learning was responsive and came as a reaction to daily work issues. This might reveal a lack of institution-led professional learning, or describes her own preference of learning, or possibly reports both, as she stated that she had access to a limited number of in-house PLD sessions some of which she eventually found irrelevant. Ruth's narrative discusses her individual and autonomous efforts to change practices based on her understanding of work context and students' needs.

Although some literature (Walker, 2013, 2014) talked about the dual nature of private ESOL teaching and how it is connected to teachers' professional practices at work, teachers professional practices in private post-school education are still ambiguous to the extent that some voices (Baltodano, 2012; Ruth, 2018) tackled the neoliberal view of education, students

as paying customer, and accused it of destroying key educational values. This highlights the tension created by bringing business rules into education which affected teachers' professional practices including their PLD choices. Ruth's perception of merging business values with ESOL teaching principles challenges Baltodano (2012) and the researcher Ruth's (2018) call for taking business out of education, as she believes that business values can make education a more rewarding experience for private paying clients such as ESOL international students in PTEs in Christchurch.

Teacher identity and agency

Another important theme in Ruth's narrative is the way she perceives the teacher role and her ability to act on and own change. The themes of teacher identity and agency are discussed in other narratives such as Sensei; anecdotes of agentic practices are evident throughout the five case studies.

Ruth's narrative adds to the understanding of teacher identity and agency as interrelated aspects of a teacher's professional practice. Her perception of teaching as a role in life enhanced her inner sense of maintaining high professional standards and bringing real changes to students' lives. Ruth stated that working with students from various countries with different sociocultural backgrounds shaped and reshaped her professional learning activities. She also stated that dealing with colleagues and managers within the workplace brought some changes to her professional practices such as the time when she was questioning the use of writing the learning objectives on the board. All these internal and external aspects of identity formation are presented as connected to boosting her sense of agency and taking charge of her professional practice.

Ruth's narrative presents teacher identity and agency not only as interrelated aspects, but multidimensional and culturally shaped. Himmaman and others (2019) investigated identity formation and agency shaping among five pre-service EFL teachers in Thailand and found out that teacher identity can be formed through identity negotiation while interacting with the surrounding teaching context. They also stated that teacher identity interacts and enhances teacher agency (p. 147). This resonates with Ruth's narratives which show teacher identity as a catalyst of her own sense of agency, as she stated that she decided to take charge of her learning to support students' progress and maintain her reputation as a good teacher. However, the way teacher identity and agency are described in Ruth's narrative shows the complexity of the relationship between the two.

While Ruth's narrative resonates with Himmapan et al.'s (2019) who found out that identity formation enhances teachers' sense of agency, it adds to the understanding of the dynamic cause-and-effect relationship between teacher identity and agency. In other words, Ruth stated that her agency is motivated by her inner sense of being a teacher, and she noted that dealing successfully with one teaching challenge after the other, and observing others' successful experiences, boosted her sense of being capable of handling any future teaching issues. Ruth's narrative shows that her identity boosted her sense of agency while her agentic actions supported her professional identity formation. This resonates with Bandura's (1997, 2006) ideas that observing successful experiences and mastering skills enhances one's sense of being able to lead change. In conclusion, Ruth's narrative sheds light on teacher identity which mediates and is mediated by teacher agency as well as sociocultural, and political work life influences.

Interdependency

One of the key themes in Ruth's narrative is interdependency. Like Paula Silva, Ruth believes in autonomy and taking initiatives in order to succeed as an ESOL teacher. She repeatedly stated that she was always keen to take the initiatives to lead change in her own practices. Her narrative shows autonomous practices such as making a decision of changing the course material for students and designing a completely new curriculum. However, this sense of autonomy has not stopped her from consulting managers and benefitting from other teachers' experiences.

This strongly resonates with Furnborough's (2012) investigation of adult students' autonomy, and differentiation between their autonomy and independency. While she defined the latter as solo learning, she stated that learning is a social activity which requires working with others, and this enhances individuals' autonomous interdependency (p. 112). Furnborough used the term autonomous interdependency to refer to adults' individual learning practices while considering the social milieu (p. 100). When Ruth described the change in her professional practices, she asserted that she has done this by collaborating with other teachers and academic managers to sort out key teaching issues. This shows how simultaneously her individual and agentic actions took place with interdependent practices.

The benefit of Ruth's collaborative learning has not been limited to learning about ESOL teaching; her professional practices show a wide range of collaborative learning outcomes and types. For example, when she needed to learn more about teaching she decided to read books,

observe other teachers teaching, and discuss their learning options. She firmly thought that her teaching colleagues sometimes come up with different and new learning pathways. Therefore, next to knowledge about teaching methods and techniques, she also learned how to better her professional learning strategies; learning how to learn. She also said that when she was given some academic readings collected by a colleague about how to teach writing, she perceived that she learned how to find, collect and classify material for her future professional learning incidents as well as benefiting from the content of the accumulated material about teaching academic writing. In other words, she noted that she learned twice, one time when she read about how to teach writing, and second by observing the other teacher's learning practices.

Ruth's stories about interdependence introduce it as a relational aspect in teachers' work lives. Her narrative includes anecdotes about both negative and positive aspects of interdependence. In two different contexts, she engaged differently with other teachers' learning and professional practices. She worked with teachers who were not willing to share and help each other, and teachers worked solely and separated in bubbles to the extent that they guard their teaching materials. Compared to other teachers in the same institution, she thought that she taught effectively. However considering other institutions, she realised that she learned and developed less. On contrary, she appreciated belonging to and learned more in a context which valued her contributions and where teachers worked collaboratively.

This resonates with Billett's (2006) ideas about how the relationships among teachers decide on whether the institution as a whole can practice positive or negative interdependence. He described interdependence as a relational aspect which is negotiated between an individual teacher and social influences, and is bounded by their relations at work (p. 54). Ruth's story adds to the understanding of interdependence as she noted that while interacting and collaborating with colleagues and managers, she reflected on and questioned others' ideas before adopting and taking them to her classroom. In conclusion, Ruth's learning practices reflect a mixture of being autonomous, taking agentic actions and being engaged in collaborative activities in an autonomous-interdependent manner.

Chapter Nine: Emily the Bricoleur

Autonomous Improvisation

“I keep learning about everything. I’m curious about everything”

(Emily, 2019)

Getting to know Emily

Emily has been teaching the English language to adult-speakers of other languages for two years in New Zealand and around four years overseas. She completed a Master’s degree of Education in English language teaching in her home country, and travelled to New Zealand to study a Ph.D. in education. In New Zealand, she spent two years studying for a Ph.D. before she decided to stop her studies and start teaching ESOL in private institutions in Christchurch. Her experience in teaching ESOL in Christchurch included two different private post-school institutions.

I first met Emily when we worked for the same ESOL teaching institution. We were recruited as fixed-term teachers of English for academic purposes (EAP). Like other PTEs, international students in this PTE come to study academic English to be able to join their postgraduate studies in New Zealand universities. EAP courses encompass advanced academic writing skills such as writing research-based essays, so teachers are expected to have a good research background. Emily, as an EAP teacher, has been an active researcher during the time she studied her Masters and Ph.D. We taught the same group of students, cooperated in creating learning materials, and had a few informal discussions about students’ progress and teachers’ professional practice. Therefore, I invited her to participate in this study. She firmly accepted and agreed to schedule the three interviews.

Emily’s learning philosophy

As we taught the same group of students, I once asked her to help me find some teaching materials about writing academic essays. The following day she brought a range of relevant teaching materials along with academic articles which explain the teaching philosophy behind these activities. The way she dealt with and filtered academic references shows that she knew how to find evidence from the literature to support her points of view, and this seems logical to me due to skills she acquired during her master’s and Ph.D. studies.

After this incident and in the first interview, I asked her why she bothered working hard to find the teaching materials for me and attaching relevant literature to them, and she said that she

has always been a dedicated person since childhood to the extent that she thought that she has obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). I asked her to explain more on what OCD means, she told me that she perceives it positively as it provokes her dedication to focus on what she has been doing. She explained:

When I was six years old, I had OCD which is obsessive compulsive disorder. I think I started having it since I was six. This means no one needs to pressure me to do anything as long as it is related to my study. For example when I was six and I had homework, and I stayed at home to do my homework. The dinner was ready and my mom just asked me “hey, the dinner is ready, please come to the table.” and I said, “sorry, I need some more time because I have to do my homework”. Until I had finished my homework, I did not have dinner.

After she talked about herself as a young learner, I asked her how she perceives herself as an adult learner. She commented:

I am the type of person who likes learning and likes having fun. When I am having fun I like to have pure fun. I do not want to think about other things, I just want to enjoy the moment totally and completely. When I am learning and I have something to complete, I will just feel stressed until I finish it.

As we worked together, I had the chance to observe Emily’s interaction with teaching duties and work life in general. Her professional practices reflected a determined person who is knowledge-oriented and has always been curious and eager to learn about the world. I saw her reading books about cosmology and literature next to ESOL teaching books. When I asked her about the reason she adopted this learning approach, she said:

For me everywhere in life is like an active learning [*learning opportunity*] and not passive learning. For example, after school, I can find relevant resources to read about cosmology. I prefer to update my knowledge all the time, not only focusing on teacher learning or language education.

The time I asked her to tell me about professional activities which she has been engaged in to maintain learning and support change in her teaching practices, she said that she used the available resources. I asked her to walk me through a teaching experience, and she shared a

story with me about when she decided to change the writing techniques to help students stop imitating written samples of academic texts, known as product writing. She decided to follow a process writing approach. I asked her whether she had a chance to talk to colleagues about this change. She replied:

I have to say that it has been a time of improvised teaching. If students have difficulties in certain things, it [*improvising*] goes on and on. In fact, when I got this material I did not want to examine it from another teacher's perspective. It was like improvising during the classroom to help students write better essays.

She believes that change in her professional practice mainly comes as a response to the teaching environment and students' daily-learning issues. Therefore, emerging classroom issues and necessities enhanced her ability to try different teaching techniques, and changed her professional practices. She stated that she has been dealing with work life issues by sticking to what works with students. Emily has also asserted that this process might happen inside and outside the classroom. She explained:

Sometimes at night if I thought about something that happened in the classroom or about students' learning. I think "ok, I have to do it tomorrow." Maybe I accumulated different questions through these different years of teaching, [*by doing this*], I just accumulate some experience about teaching.

Throughout the three interviews, she described the change in her professional practice as a result of accumulative teaching and learning experiences. When I asked her how she learned to adopt this learning attitude, she first said that it is like common sense among teachers. After a second thought she said:

I believe it is a gift. I did a test when I was doing my master's degree, so the course was called *Gifted and Talented Education* and I just did a test that showed that I am kind of gifted, in terms of observing and learning from all around me.

Ongoing learning

In her anecdotes about professional learning, Emily repeatedly stated that students were always the parameter through which she measured the quality of her teaching practices. She stated that

grappling with students' learning challenges is always a continuous aspect of her work life as an ESOL teacher, especially in PTEs. Therefore, she has been utilising this ongoing challenge to change her own teaching techniques as well as the teaching materials to suit students' needs. She said:

If students are not understanding this part, so I am going to change my plan according to my students' requirements and performance. For example, if they are really familiar with a structure based on the textbook, so I can skip it to other parts in which they need to improve. I can have spare time to prepare other things like complimentary resources.

Emily highlighted that ESOL students come from different countries with different backgrounds, and they study ESOL for a few months before joining the university. She noticed that this fast pacing of students finishing their studies and leaving the institution brings new challenges with each new group, as teachers in PTEs would have to deal with different students' needs more frequently than teachers at schools. Emily stated that this continuity of challenges has created a parallel continuity in her need to learn and update her knowledge.

She also affirmed that her academic managers and colleagues who give her constructive feedback on her performance and her teaching skills presented learning opportunities. When I asked her to explain more on how colleagues and managers supported her ongoing professional learning, she said that she started learning about and applying critical thinking after a colleague had drawn her attention to its importance in developing academic writing skills. She explained:

I remember one of my friends who got a doctoral degree who helped me a lot when he asked me to try my logic and apply critical thinking to develop ideas every day. He just gave me a topic and asked me to practice. Then I realised I got a lot of support and help by doing this. That was a very good way.

Therefore, she affirmed that this continuous interaction with the surrounding society to sort out daily problems of practice came as a catalyst for her to get engaged in non-stop professional learning activities. She said:

I always think a good teacher or a gifted teacher should be a long-life learner.

When I asked her why she believes that skilful teachers should always be engaged in continuous learning, she responded:

One of my professors once said “as a teacher you need to keep long-life learning, so you keep becoming a good teacher’. You need to do much self-retrospection and you need to be curious like a child.

Then she thought deeply for about a minute, and broke her silence and said:

Reading, watching movies, listening to music, and all the things. Talking with different people from different cultural backgrounds; they are still kinds of learning for me.

Then she said that she believes that learning about teaching is not only a continuous process, but Emily perceived it as a concept which covers all sorts of learning. She said:

As a teacher, I keep learning every day from different things. Concerning language usage, I read the articles from the BBC, the Guardian. Sometimes I choose literature because although I am teaching academic English, I still need to improve my knowledge about the language used in literature. So yes actually I read something about politics, cosmology, literature, and economics, so I can also learn some different words or phrases from different genres.

Emily’s professional learning is not limited to content knowledge and pedagogy. Her pursuit of learning about ESOL teaching includes learning about everything, as she said she firmly believed that learning openly about life is necessary for improving her professional teaching practices. She went on to elaborate that she would not mind reading about different types of wine and drinking habits, so she can participate in and contribute to students’ and colleagues’ discussions about non-ESOL topics such as social gatherings and drinking games. Therefore, learning for her should be non-stop and not limited to ESOL.

Emily went on to explain the benefits of her continuous learning which enhanced her professional practices as well as providing a good model of learning for her students to follow. She explained:

According to my students’ feedback, it seems that they think it is a really good way to learn. Because they have seen their teacher is still learning, I

think they still get some motivation to keep learning. Because they think “oh, our teacher is still learning!” it is helpful for them, too.

Emily thought her pursuit of learning about various aspects of life has another social aspect, as she can create rapport with students by talking to them about their life matters. She said:

Because I like learning, it does not mean that I keep learning about language [*only*]. I keep learning about everything; I am curious about everything. For example, if some students are really interested in cosmology, I can just talk to them. They may think “I have a friend now”, so they can just have an interest in my class. And for students who are majoring in arts. However, I do not major in arts, still, I get some information about arts like music, like movies. So in their spare time or during their discussions, I can join them and my students can create a kind of bonding with me so they are going to believe me.

Then she went on to explain that continuous learning allows her to maintain the image of the knowledgeable teacher which she finds very important for her professional success. She explained:

When I learn something, I feel more confident to teach it to my students. To be knowledgeable is always connected to my being interesting, and to be an interesting person is very important for me. If the Asian students did not feel that the teacher is knowledgeable, they do not want to trust her. They expect their teacher to have qualifications and be knowledgeable. It is very important to me, I still hope that more and more of my students find me an interesting and knowledgeable teacher. It is a personal thing for me, no matter whether it is the same for other teachers or not.

Awareness of students’ cultural backgrounds

It was not always easy to find time to have an interview with Emily. Like other EAP teachers, she was always busy marking students’ assignments and preparing for lessons. It required trials to arrange interviews and sometimes rescheduling until we were able to allocate a gap in her schedule to have the interviews. For one of the interviews, the only possible time was during her lunch, so she brought her lunch and came to the interview. It is not unusual to have an interview over lunch or a cup of coffee, but we were under the pressure of the limited time for

the lunch break, so I decided to divide the third interview into two sessions. Therefore, Emily attended four interviews.

We started our discussion by talking about what skills she believed are essential for ESOL learners. She suggested that critical thinking is one of the key skills for students, especially those who are planning to complete postgraduate studies. She illustrated:

There are people whom when I talk to, I immediately feel there must be something wrong. They have learned a lot and they have read a lot, but they never ask themselves the questions of self-reflection. They have learned a lot but without enough thinking. They have a lot of knowledge, but they do not know how to use them.

Critical thinking is essential for Emily, as she affirmed that without creative ideas language is just an empty vessel, and students need to use language as a tool to learn how to build arguments and support their ideas about a specific topic. She noted:

It is not only about language, language is just a tool. I believe that critical thinking and developing ideas are the foundations.

I asked her to walk me through one of her ESOL teaching experiences in which she had to work on learners' critical thinking. She said:

Well, I think every teacher has a different method. Some teachers focus on grammar, some teachers focus on language use, some teachers focus on logic and critical thinking. I am this kind of teacher. I believe critical thinking and developing ideas are the most important two things for students if they want to do further studies. Many students here [*one PTE in Christchurch*] are going to go to postgraduate studies, and it is really important for them to have critical thinking and know-how to develop ideas.

Then, she continued by sharing a story with me about when her students were not able to produce academic texts as they lacked critical thinking. She said that students could not write argumentative essays as they could not reflect deeply on their ideas. She argued that education systems in their home countries did not provide them with enough training on critical thinking.

Emily was once an international student in New Zealand. She said that the reason, why she had sympathy towards her students, was that she had been through the same learning experience before them. Thus, in her lessons, she gave higher priority to critical thinking. She noted:

As you know, I have got many students from certain countries [*East Asia*], and they lack critical thinking. It was a challenge for me when I was a student, too.

Emily repeatedly referred to her awareness of students' backgrounds. She comes from East Asia like most of them, so she affirmed that she understands their needs, common learning challenges, and learning preferences. She said:

Students think about ideas in different ways. For example, when they need to think about advantages, and at the same time they need to consider the disadvantages; to show different views of the same thing and discuss them amongst each other. Sometimes I ask my students to have a formal debate, it is another thing. Even though they start to show that they have critical thinking skills, but it was so difficult for them to develop ideas.

When I asked her about what else informed her decisions about using these techniques inside the classroom. She replied:

Because I practiced this way to improve my critical thinking and developed ideas. I think it is pretty useful so I tend to use the same way to guide my students.

Emily's knowledge about students' backgrounds came from two sources. Firstly, she highlighted her being a student of English as a second language in the past as the first factor which allowed her to understand their learning worries and accumulate skills of overcoming academic challenges. In addition to that, she highlighted the fact that she came from the same country, so she knew that most of them would have a great need to acquire critical thinking skills for their future studies in New Zealand. Emily affirmed that being aware of students' background and learning history would make her a better teacher, and consequently guide change in her actual professional practices to suit learners' needs.

Past experience

Emily talked repeatedly about the role which her past experiences have played in changing her professional practice. Overall, past experience in Emily's anecdotes referred to her own past

experience of being a student. Moreover, she highlighted her accumulative teaching experience which lasted for around six years of teaching ESOL overseas and in New Zealand.

When Emily first mentioned that her performance as a teacher has been guided by her experience as a student in her home country. I commented that all teachers have been students before they start their careers. However, Emily insisted that she was different in this regard. Over the four interviews, she talked about her past experience of being a student which has informed her teaching techniques and practices. She said:

So when I learned English I encountered a lot of problems and difficulties. I remember many years ago I needed to think about different ideas, try to view different sides of these ideas, and develop further ideas. These things were very difficult for me at this time. I never forgot how I dealt with them.

Emily has learned from the challenges which she faced as a school student. She noted that this allowed her to put herself in her students' positions, and become more understanding of their study challenges and learning needs. She noted:

It is a kind of empathy, because it is relatively easy for me to feel sympathetic towards my students. Just I am trying to think what if I am a student, what do I need? And I can really understand how difficult they are feeling at the moment. They have to pay attention to so many different things. If I watch their faces, I know they need some extra material so I find some for them.

Emily shared memories with me about her experience as a student which have not been limited to the school experiences, but also included university time in New Zealand. She seemed to permanently carry this sense of learning from being a school and a postgraduate student. She noted that she has observed her teachers' performance, and accumulated a wide range of teaching techniques. She stated that in New Zealand, as an international student, she was challenged by the different research culture, and it took her much effort to cope with the academic environment. Therefore, she decided to use her accumulated experiences as an international postgraduate student to guide students' learning about language. She said:

I have the experienced academic areas; I have got experience to do research and I have read a lot of academic papers. Mostly I based on my previous knowledge and experience to help students get ready for university.

When I asked her why she affirmed that she can help her students, Emily said that she wanted to provide them with essential university life skills such as critical thinking. She was a postgraduate student in the same university where these students would soon start their further studies. She said:

I gained a lot of improvement by doing this. I experienced this as a learner. I had these independent and critical thinking skills at university as a postgraduate student. I carried all these skills to my learning about teaching.

Then I asked her to explain the relationship between her being an ESOL student and the change she had noticed in her actual professional practices as an ESOL teacher. She firmly said that change had a great impact on her development as a teacher, and walked me through her experience when she taught a group of international students who were supposed to start postgraduate studies after finishing the EAP course. She chose to apply the same learning practices with them, and asked them to follow the same techniques and strategies which she had adopted as a student.

I asked her to walk me through an experience of guiding her students' learning by utilising her previous experiences as a student. She noted:

I think the experience of doing a Ph.D. research helps teachers a lot because it helped me to continue learning. I learned how and where to find better resources. I was also a postgraduate student before, I did a master's degree.

Then she shared a story with me about when she noticed that most of her students were struggling with finding proper resources and good academic articles to support their arguments in a research-based writing task. She decided to investigate the problem. As a previous postgraduate student, she knew that when students use wrong keywords in their research for articles, they can easily lose track of the phenomenon which they are investigating. Then she designed a lesson on how to identify key research words before looking for resources and references. She said:

They just searched something and they cannot find good examples. Well, I said you have to change the search keywords. Then I realise that it is a skill that not everyone knows how to do it.

She went on to say that understanding the concept of key words helped her students to find articles faster. She commented on the outcome of this experience confirming that while not all students were able to locate resources successfully, almost all students were informed about the importance of choosing the right keywords before getting engaged in a research project.

She also shared a story with me about when she needed to enhance her critical thinking abilities, she tried text analysis and asking further questions to enhance her critical thinking skills. She noted that these techniques worked with her and she noticed development in her skills to think critically about different topics. Therefore, she asked her students to follow the same technique to develop their critical thinking while writing academic essays. She said:

When I learned English I encountered difficulties, critical thinking was very difficult for me. One of my friends helped me a lot. He just gave me a topic to practice. This helped my students.

When she chose to focus on enhancing students' research skills and critical thinking, her decision was driven by her past experience as a Ph.D. student. I asked her how past learning experiences and activities would suit her current students. She enthusiastically replied that she understood the differences between generations and considered them. She explained:

I have experienced being a learner, and I know how helpful it is to have research skills, so I bring extra material to allow my students to have more practice. It will save them a lot of time and give them better performance.

Emily utilised her past experience not to repeat the exact learning and teaching her practices, but to enhance students' learning experiences. She affirmed that her past experiences constituted a range of tried and tested practices which can provide a good base for students' learning. She said:

I just wanted to do something to benefit them. My experience as a learner, and I am a non-native speaker. I have learned from this and I think they will learn from it, too. They have a similar background as I do.

I asked her to what extent she believed in her experience as a learner, and she answered:

Because I struggled before, I actually know in what kind of situation they need help. I can remember all the stages I experienced as a learner, I have

gained lot of benefits by using this method. I am still confident now that my students can learn from this way.

Observing students

We talked about the challenges she faced while teaching and her strategies for dealing with these challenges. She shared a story with me about when students deviated from their main learning objectives. Emily noticed that students started to insert some irrelevant sentences and a range of unnecessary ideas into their written essays. Then, she decided to create a writing guide for her students on how to write an essay and avoid deviating from the main topic. When I asked her how she managed to identify and deal with this issue, she commented:

I think I am good at observing students, and identify their different requirements; even if their emotional needs. This is how as an ESOL teacher I was familiar with my students' various learning issues and especially in terms of academic writing skills such as cohesion and coherence.

She went on to explain the outcome of maintaining the habit of observing students, and added that she accumulated a set of beliefs which usually guide her teaching and direct her professional practices in response to students' academic and emotional needs. She said:

I accumulated different questions through these years of teaching. I have just been accumulating experiences, and I strongly believed in what I knew and experienced.

I asked her about who taught her to deal with various challenges; she laughed and pointed to herself implying that it was a moment of innovation. She said:

My teaching style is a little bit independent, I have a connection with my students. My teaching style is dependent on my students' reactions and interactions. My learning happens all the time and it is student-centred.

Questioning teaching practices

When Emily talked about the influence of her beliefs and past experience upon her teaching practices, she showed high confidence in them. However, I wanted to know more about whether she ever questioned her teaching practices and adopted different teaching techniques.

In our first interview, she responded that she does not usually question her own teaching practices. She confirmed:

Not quite often; you are going to know whether you are a good teacher or not, I do not question myself very often. It all depends on my students' performance. Only when my students have some confusions, I start questioning my teaching.

In the second interview, I asked her about how often teachers should reflect on their practices in general. She said that they should do this all the time. Then I reminded her of her response in the first interview stating that she rarely questions her teaching practices. Then, she explained her understanding of the differences between questioning, reflecting and introspecting her own professional practices. She said that she always introspects her practices by asking those constructive questions rather than pressurising herself on negative aspects. She also stated that she was always motivated by her successful experiences rather than exposing herself to be depressed by the unsuccessful ones. She noted:

Teachers need to introspect themselves to improve themselves. Question yourself in a positive way, otherwise you are going to feel depressed.

I asked her to explain this more, and she said:

Of course, we need to question ourselves. I think that is a good way to improve yourself. I always ask myself questions, like almost every day. Asking myself is not questioning or doubting what I am doing. It is more of self-introspection rather than doubting.

When I asked her about to what extent she has been engaged in self-retrospection, she noted:

Self-retrospection is my habit, I always ask myself what went well and how to expand it.

Then Emily went on by highlighting other aspects which guided change in her professional practice. She said:

I think it is a combination of theories, my past experience, my teaching experience, my experience about everything.

After revisiting the topic of utilising her past experiences as a student and a teacher as professional learning resources, she highlighted reviewing articles and ESOL teaching books

as a third source of her professional learning. When I asked her about how she gained knowledge about teaching theories, she noted:

Reading papers. For example, I read some papers about technology of education, like eLearning, tailored education. What kind of things the teachers need to update, what kind of things they need to focus on. Also maybe because of my research so I just read something about it like different aspects.

Internet and professional learning

Emily shared a story with me about when students were not confident about what essay structure they need to follow to write a good compare and contrast academic essay. She noted that this was one of the challenges which she faced, and she decided to talk to other teachers about it. Although she found the teachers' discussion helpful, she decided to go online and find extra teaching material to support students' learning. I asked her why she needed to go online and find extra teaching material. She enthusiastically responded:

I had to search a lot of other things online to see whether there is some good examples of structures. Actually, I do not really rely on models. I think there is not a perfect model for students at this stage, and the requirements are so different. So what I wanted to do, was to find some examples in order to show the process of generating ideas and how to make a plan.

Emily stated that she wanted students to learn about the processes of creating ideas, critically thinking about and evaluating ideas to improve their writing. Although other teachers preferred to provide students with a model of a compare and contrast essay to guide their essay writing and structure planning, she thought this was not enough. Therefore, she decided to go online to find more resources to allow students to figure it out for themselves rather than spoonfeeding them. When I asked her where she found these relevant and supporting materials, she did not take time to think and answered by saying that it was the internet. She said it was Google.

Emily's anecdotes show that she believed in the internet as a source for information and professional learning to a great extent. Although she relied on the internet as a learning tool, she said that she had a selection criterion for information. She said:

I check whether it [*information*] is from a certain university or not; from certain libraries or not and if I am familiar with it so I trust them.

She stated that she had experience in research and knew how to select reliable resources. She confirmed:

I found it by myself and also by filtering some other resources and I compared them a lot, and finally, I decide to use this one.

When I asked her to walk me through an experience of enhancing students' performance using the online materials, she explained:

I found some extra materials, and asked students to read them. Then, I outlined the key parts to discuss with them. Every time I asked my students to discuss it and underline which part is the best, which part they need to learn from, which parts they need to rewrite. Students needed to improve, and I thought it was really good practice for them, and also at the same time improved their critical thinking.

Emily also confirmed that she was completely satisfied with the outcome of this specific teaching experience, as she managed to get them to practice critical thinking while planning for their writing tasks. When I asked her whether the internet has played a role in facilitating students' education, she firmly affirmed that the internet was always an effective learning tool. She said:

It helps me to continue learning. Every time I faced any difficulties in terms of teaching or learning, I knew where to find the better resources. I am becoming better at this skill, I did not realise this until recently.

Emily stated that utilising her research skills which she learned as a student allowed her to bring more beneficial study material to students, and affected her professional practices.

Me, myself and I

After talking about a few challenges which Emily has faced during teaching, she noted that she also made decisions to deal with these challenges. Then I asked her whether she needed or chose to talk to others about her professional learning needs. She firmly stated that most of the time she found answers on her own for teaching challenges and brought about the change in her professional practices. She said:

I will go and find some resources to help me. I just see how I can do that.

Yeah, me, myself, *[laughing]*. As you know ... independent thinking.

Emily perceived private ESOL teaching as a particular work context which encompasses different teachers and various professional learning and teaching approaches. She stated that she learns differently and has adopted her own attitude towards supporting change in her professional practices.

I think it is really useful, but perhaps it is not suitable for every teacher.

Like students, teachers are different.

In the following interview, we revisited the topic of her sense of autonomy, and I asked her whether the institution has a role in initiating or supporting her learning. She noted that, according to her current teaching experience, having an interview before taking the job is enough to create trust between her and the institution's management. She noted:

The school trust all the teachers; completely. You come to work here, so you must already have had an interview. They do not force teachers to learn things. Usually, teachers learn by themselves, freely *[laughing]*.

Then, she thought for a while and talked about the role which an institution's management would play to bring change to teachers' work lives. She said:

The school had a lot of resources, we have course books, and we have extra resources. We have computers, so if you want to find something or download materials. Also, the coordinators are helpful. It is a good time to learn from others during moderation.

Talking about learning from others had not been a very common in Emily's interviews. She rarely talked about collaborative learning experiences, so I asked her to explain more on how she learned from other teachers during these moderation sessions. She replied:

In these *[moderation]* sessions, different teachers attend. Everyone has different ideas *[about how to grade the same writing task]*, and people discuss. During this debate, I can learn. If you have a different opinion you definitely need to persuade others by using evidence.

When I asked her whether these discussions would have an impact on her actual teaching practices, she noted:

Usually, I am going to adjust my teaching based on the result of the moderation meeting, it is a really good opportunity for me to know how standards change. This allows me to have a clearer understanding, and I can give feedback to my students. It is really good.

She kept talking about the outcome of these moderation sessions and said that she considers these sessions as starting points for further learning. She takes teachers' debates and questions and extends them into learning opportunities. When I asked her with whom she discusses the outcome of these professional learning opportunities, she confirmed that she does this individually and on her own as she did not feel the need to have a second opinion. She stated:

When people talk, I am going to have some basic ideas about what I am going to learn about next. Then extend it by no one, but me, myself. I like learning a lot, otherwise, I would not do a Ph.D. Plus nobody is going to push you to do that thing. You have to rely on yourself.

Emily worked with others and was always part of colleagues' discussions about ESOL teaching as well as other life matters. However, when it comes to sorting out a question of practice, she preferred to go and investigate it individually. When I asked her what motivates her to keep this attitude towards professional learning, she insisted:

Me, myself have been the motivation. Me, myself push me to do things more efficiently.

Emily's preference to work individually seemed to be a personal preference. Her collaborative trials were just short and informal discussions with colleagues. However, she might not have had the chance to be introduced to a wider range of in-house professional learning activities which motivated her curiosity and challenged her logic to be formally or informally engaged in collaborative learning with other teachers.

Key themes that emerge

The following key themes emerge while reading the narrative of Emily.

Emily's professional learning practices in response to work conditions

One of the key themes in Emily's narrative is how she perceived private ESOL teaching as a workplace and its impact on her professional practice. Private ESOL teaching in her stories is

a multidimensional work milieu, and this added to its complexity which seemed to provoke Emily's reflection on her own practices.

Complex work environment

On one level, ESOL students are multinational and multi-cultural. Although almost all of them are adults, a few students are still under the financial and emotional care of their families. These students can be considered in their transitional stage towards becoming adults. Emily stated that this complexity of heterogeneous classes which have different types of students brings a wide range of challenges to teachers and requires teacher awareness of their cultural and educational backgrounds. Other elements of students' learning complexity are that they study EAP courses which last only for weeks or a few months. Teachers are supposed to deal with totally new groups of students every new module which was perceived by Emily as a challenge to maintain rapport with students. She stated that these circumstances require crucial and frequent changes in teachers' practices inside and outside classrooms. This concurs with another participant's comments, Paula Silva, about student's short study periods, and implies that students' fast graduation and new enrolment pacing could be faster than teachers' adaptability to cope with change.

On a different level, Emily stated that the private ESOL teaching context is complex because of the gap between students' needs and the provided curriculum content. She regularly stated that she had to find extra teaching materials to support students' learning of academic writing. It was not only because of the scarcity of teaching materials, but she noted that the course book was limited to specific academic writing techniques. Then she had to find teaching material which follows a different approach which supports students' critical thinking. She affirmed that the product writing approach would not urge students to think critically and reflect on their own thoughts. Although she voluntarily decided to expand the scope of her students' learning, the institution management was satisfied with other teachers' performance who limited their teaching to the course book. However, as a previous postgraduate student, she realises how important it is for students to practice critical thinking at this stage.

On a third level, the complexity of the environment of private ESOL teaching in Emily's narrative was revealed when she talked about the gap between the level of institutional learning activities and teachers' actual professional learning needs and preferences. Emily relied heavily on her own beliefs and past practices as a student as well as being an ESOL teacher while institutions offered a few in-house PLD activities. This explains her attitude when she claimed

that the institution's management should trust teachers and give them the freedom to apply their expertise. She also stated that institutions should also secure access to learning resources including ESOL books and access to the internet to facilitate their professional learning. As an example, she referred to her current teaching environment in one of the PTEs where teachers' PLD was left to teachers to take control of.

Emily seems not to expect the institution to systematically contribute to her PLD; she believes that advancements in her professional practices are individual responsibility. Therefore, the decisions she made and that resulted in a change in her practice were mostly individually driven, while institution management could have provided pedagogical enablers and tools to facilitate her learning in a collaborative environment. It is possible that institutions have a range of PLD sessions, but as reported in Emily and other participants such as Mary and Ruth these sessions were not fully teacher-directed.

Professional learning practices: Emily the bricoleur

In response to the above described work environment, Emily reported utilising specific professional learning practices. She decided to go on her own and use her research skills to find reliable learning resources. It is reasonable to argue that Emily's learning attitude was merely an individual preference, but it can be perceived as an indicator of the weak status the institution played in creating collaborative learning activities for teachers. In other words, due to lack of organisational enablers, she relied on her personal skills and individually acquired enablers which resulted in more individual rather than collaborative professional learning. Emily's individual decisions to take charge of her PLD strongly resonates with the findings of some studies conducted in both management and ESOL education fields (Hatton, 1988; Starr-Glass, 2010; Visscher, Heusinkveld, & O'Mahoney, 2018) which argued that unless the institutional learning plays a role in shaping the individual professional practices, individuals would figure out solutions for themselves.

When Emily stated that she went online to select and filter resources, she implied that she has adopted a *what's-in-reach* approach to deal with immediate work issues and achieve the best possible outcome through utilising the available limited resources. Emily stated that she repeatedly chose to improvise while dealing with daily teaching challenges and managing her own professional learning activities. In other words, she did not follow any predetermined professional learning plan. While she stated that she liked to improvise, it can be implied from

her statements that there was not a challenging model of professional practice within the institution which would motivate her to adopt a different PLD attitude.

Emily's attitude towards professional learning can also be perceived as merely her personal choice. Mæland and Espeland (2017) studied improvisation practices among teachers of postgraduate students including the English language teachers and identified four of its characteristics. One key characteristic of improvisation in teachers' work life is that it is dependent on the work milieu; while it comes as an essential part of teachers' sense of autonomy, it does not necessarily contradict with their sense of accountability (pp. 200-202). Emily seemed content with her performance, especially when she was able to keep students and managers satisfied. She was able to function effectively as an ESOL teacher, or at least she thought so, without the feeling that she lacks knowledge or tools for success.

Emily's narrative adds to the understanding of the context of private ESOL teaching, as it seemed flexible to comfortably accommodate all teachers without the urgent need to differentiate between various types of teachers from novice to veteran. It is possibly true that there is a lack of standards and policies which evaluate teachers' performance. However, investigating to what extent teachers' professional practices in private ESOL teaching reflects ESOL teaching standards might require further studies which involve interviewing other stakeholders such as managers and academic supervisors.

When Emily described her PLD practices she said that her learning is not limited to learning about ESOL teaching, she learns from everything and about anything in life; whatever comes in her way is a potential learning opportunity. She said she read about various aspects of life in the hope that someday this would contribute to her image as a knowledgeable teacher or simply give her the knowledge to participate in a social discussion about general topics such as cosmology or drinking protocols with students and colleagues. When she was learning, she usually did not have a specific purpose in mind, and she said that her learning was sometimes shaped by the available reading resources. It is arguable that Emily learned generally about any aspects of life, but her learning and consequently the spectrum of her knowledge about ESOL teaching was still limited to the repertoire of her individual pursuit of information.

That being said, the above discussed characteristics of Emily's professional practices suggest a particular professional learning and practice model. Emily's professional practice resonates with the metaphor of the bricolage, widely used in management and organisation studies, presented originally by Levi-Strauss (1966) who described the individual bricoleur as a

craftsman who works with their hands and uses devious means to recombine available resources in a creative manner to produce more. The bricoleur Emily adopted an attitude of a professional-do-it-yourself to deal with work life daily challenges. In addition, she firmly stated that she prefers to rely on her own skills and past experiences to figure out work issues. Emily's attitude towards professional learning mirrors Hatton's and others' (Hatton, 1988; Scribner, 2005; Starr-Glass, 2010) investigations of the relationship between the bricolage and pedagogy which highlight specific features of an individual bricoleur's work life such as conservatism, limited creativity, repertoire enlargement, teachers' use of theory, the use of devious means.

Emily's narrative adds to the understanding of the bricoleur teacher, as she has used a range of learning and knowledge acquiring tools. According to Emily this type of professional learning allowed her to change her professional practices and continue her teaching career. On the one hand, it can be argued that her knowledge was limited to what she managed to reach as an individual learner. On the other hand, it is feasible that Emily was learning cooperatively by interacting with ideas in literature and authors of these books and academic articles which might replace interaction with individuals; especially in this digital era. This might eliminate the feature of limited creativity and introduce a new type of bricolage which can be creative. After analysing a wide range of the bricolage literature Di Domenico and others (2010) argued that the metaphor of bricolage should not be perceived as individuals' attempts to limit their professional learning or creativity. They stated that the bricolage came as a result of individuals' awareness of the work context and their ongoing efforts to accommodate with its challenges such as lack of institutional learning which in the case of ESOL teachers is driven by their needs rather than institution's directives (pp. 699-700).

It can also be argued that, although Emily affirmed that she managed to achieve professional progress on her own, her impact on other teachers' professional learning could have opened a door for further professional learning practices and pathways for herself as well as other teachers. The institution could have utilised such PLD opportunities to benefit the community of ESOL teaching in general. In other words, Emily could have shared her findings with other teachers in the same institution or presented in an ESOL conference with a wider range of audience. This would contribute to the other teachers' learning, add to the profession as a whole, and expand the spectrum of her professional knowledge.

Another aspect which Emily's narrative has added to the image of the bricoleur teacher is that bricoleur individuals firmly believe in their beliefs to the extent that they might resist

questioning them. In this regard, Emily differentiated between questioning her practices and reflecting positively on them. She perceived questioning or criticising her own practices as an activity which would bring only frustration. As an alternative, she stated that she reflects positively and expands her successful experiences. This explains her attempts to make her students follow the same learning pathways she had as a student, as she believed in her success. For example, she explained the reasons behind some of her successful experiences by relating them to what she called teacher *common sense*. On a different occasion, she stated that her successful experiences are due to her being a talented teacher. She might have preferred to attribute success to the teacher's common sense or her being a talented teacher who improvises change rather than acknowledging questioning her practice and critically reflecting on it. She might have wanted to avoid placing herself on the hot seat and exposing her teaching identity to be questioned. In other words, she wanted to maintain her professional image as a knowledgeable teacher unquestioned.

Professional learning pathways

A second theme which emerges while reviewing Emily's narrative is her professional learning choices and pathways. This presents the choices she made as a practitioner in the particular context of private ESOL teaching. Overall, she relied on her past experience as a source of learning, repeated past successful experiences, and applied trial and error to deal with teaching issues. She also used the internet as a learning source which she can individually use and easily control in relation to outcomes. Emily adopted more informal rather than formal professional learning pathways which suit the personality traits of a bricoleur individual as tackled above.

Past experience

Emily's description of how she utilised past experience came as a multi-layered and dynamic construct of her professional learning pathways. It was multi-layered as she relied on her past experience as a student which enriched her understanding and awareness of how students learn and what challenges they might face. She repeatedly utilised the same techniques she applied to overcome academic challenges as a student to students' learning. On a different level, her experience as a teacher which comes from accumulated exposure to students' issues and dealing with them presents a second stream of past experiences in Emily's narrative. Emily reported that a combination of these past experiences, as a teacher and as a student, informed most of her professional learning and practices. Moreover, the way Emily interacted with past experience was a dynamic process. She reported that she tested and reflected on past

experiences while applying them to students' learning, as she understands the gap between generations and individual variations among students. Therefore, she did not take past experience for granted, and was always keen on observing students' performance and satisfaction when putting them into practice.

Emily's comments about why she chose to utilise past experiences reveal that her choice to retrieve past practices was not just a matter of lack of resources in the workplace or her being overwhelmed with other tasks such as assessment and marking. Emily stated that she trusts what she knows and what she has experienced, so she chose to direct students to learn the same way. She believed in her past practices as she has been through the same experiences. The techniques she offers to her students are all tested and have proven success in similar situations.

The internet

Another learning pathway which was reported by Emily was the internet. Almost in every learning experience, she reported that she used the internet to search for learning resources for herself as well as the students, not only because the internet is ubiquitous and does not cost her money. Emily's preference to use the internet as a learning source is associated with other reasons. Firstly, she stated that she knew how to allocate a wide range of reliable resources. She also has the ability to identify key search words, so she can allocate resources quickly and efficiently. Besides, she learned how to filter and differentiate between reliable and unreliable resources as a postgraduate student. She had not realised how effective these skills are until she saw others struggling with allocating good resources simply because they were not trained on how to identify key search words for some general topics.

The internet and her own past experience were presented as the biggest learning sources; this concurs with how Emily described her professional practices. She repeatedly stated that she practices autonomy and generally learns and reflects on her practices individually. Both past experience and the internet secured platforms for her to take charge of her learning and supported her sense of agency and decision making about classroom and other professional practice issues.

Chapter Ten: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The preceding five chapters offer representations of teachers' stories about their professional practice in private post-school ESOL institutions in Christchurch. To refer to this particular work context, this study uses the terms private ESOL institutions and private training establishments (PTEs) interchangeably, and uses terms such as work environment, work conditions, work surroundings, and work circumstances to refer to teachers' immediate work context. In addition, this study accepts the work milieu as the broader work context which includes the social settings in which ESOL teachers operate. This work milieu may include influences existing outside PTEs and directing teacher professional practice such as ESOL teaching as business and the marketisation of education. The pool of participants in this study included five ESOL teachers who accepted to participate in this study, and each participant was invited to attend three semi-structured interviews which were scheduled over a period of three to nine months. After collating and analysing data from teachers' responses in the three interviews, I developed the five narratives. These narratives constituted representations of the personal and human dimensions of participants' work lives in private training establishments.

Narratives highlighted the existing tensions and complex relationships described in participants' individual experiences dealing with their immediate work environment as well as their broader work milieu and so I identified emerging themes which guided the discussion of the five narratives. The stories of participants were presented as told by participants and their meanings were reconstructed and negotiated based on my understanding as well as teachers' description of their work life experiences. Then, using key concepts drawn from the literature on ESOL teachers' professional practice, I was able to describe the complexity of teachers' professional practice as well as their nuanced understandings of their own work environment. Although in the discussions of narratives I have occasionally alluded to various theorisations, purposefully I allowed teachers' perceptions to shape my understanding of the phenomena rather than imposing a specific theory on them.

Adopting an evolving methodology and a social constructivist epistemological stance supported utilising case study methodology as an intensive description of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; S. B. Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Investigating the phenomenon of ESOL teachers' professional practice in PTEs has facilitated the study's aim to amplify and value the voices of participating teachers which seemed to be neglected or

unheard. I have been engaged with private ESOL teaching for more than fifteen years, therefore, in this phenomenological case study, I chose to step aside from my preconceived understanding of teachers' in-service professional practice theoretical frameworks and theories. In other words, I allowed teachers' narratives to guide and inform data analysis and study findings. The methodology chapter of this study explains why and how I chose to foreground teachers' voices in detail.

The five narratives have provoked discussions of ideas which I presented in the introduction and literature review chapters. In this chapter, I have intentionally stepped back from the narratives to consider how these narratives contribute to the understanding of ESOL teachers' professional practice in response to their work milieu. To achieve this I considered both what this study referred to as in-service adult learning theories and teacher professional practice at workplace, and tied them to the actual practical practices described in teachers' narratives. Analysing collected data, I noticed that similarities, and differences among participants as a group of in-service teachers as well as individual practitioners highlighted distinctions among their individual anecdotes, and this brought to the surface the heterogeneous features of each experience. This heterogeneity highlights how an individual teacher's perceived key influences in their work contexts such as private institutions' values, managers, colleagues, fee paying students, curriculum, and academic standards which individually as well as collaboratively mediated teachers' professional practice.

In the first section of this chapter, I view every narrative separately to understand the unique experiences and particulars of every participant in relation to teachers' understandings of what constitutes their immediate work environment. After that, I identify themes across the five narratives to clarify teachers' understanding of the phenomenon of their own professional practice in response to their broader work milieu. Individual participants' narratives weave a story of their survival, challenges and despair, fighting uncertainties while grappling with institutional policies, and their attempts to lead change. Hence, the themes across cases reflect teachers' understanding of their professional practice while grappling with concepts such as ESOL as business, building resilience, and in-service professional learning pathways and choices.

The following sections present private ESOL teaching work context as perceived and described by teachers in their narratives through drawing on key themes from the five cases at a micro level, before then turning to consider the overarching cross cases themes on a macro level.

Participants' narratives discussed two levels of teachers' perceptions of their teaching contexts, and this resonates with Wette (2010) who divided ESOL teachers' work context into a micro context which describes the immediate work environment within classrooms and institutions, and a macro context which includes the external and sociocultural work milieu.

Participant teachers within the private teaching context

This study is mainly about the dynamics of the relationships between ESOL teachers' professional practice and their work milieu. Consideration of the broader work context, as presented in teachers' stories, highlighted the significant complex and multi-layered role it played in teachers' professional practice. However, it is important to review participants' cultural and educational backgrounds before discussing their perceptions of key aspects which form their teaching context.

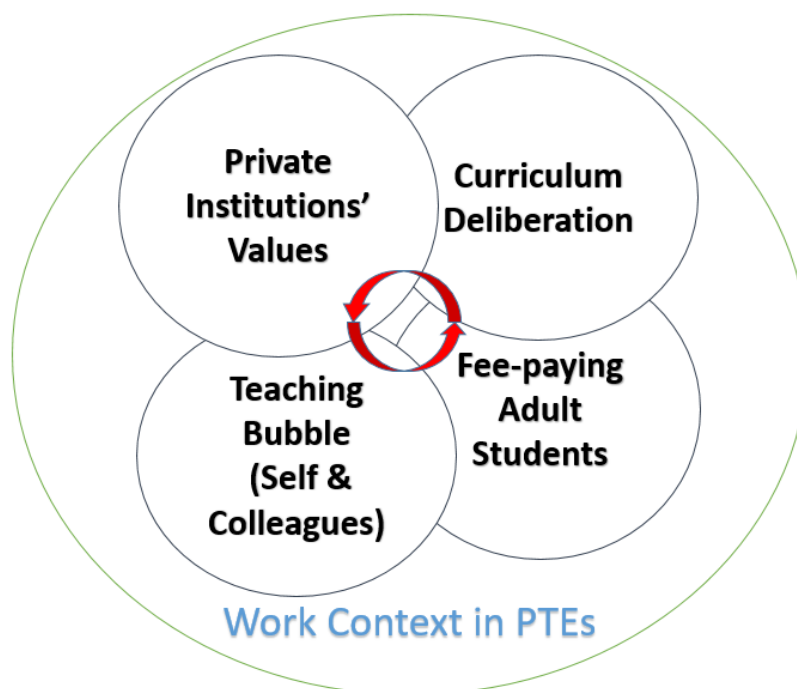
As evident in their narratives, the five participant teachers' educational backgrounds varied considerably from no ESOL qualification or certification to a postgraduate diploma in ESOL teaching. Since private ESOL teaching does not require a specific certification or teacher registration in New Zealand, teachers could be postgraduate students, completing their further studies in disciplines other than ESOL, who took up the role only to earn their living while studying. Teachers of other subjects such as social studies, history or biology can obtain a universally recognised English language teaching certificate or diploma to be accepted as an ESOL teacher. For example, Paula Silva planned to teach science and when she needed to work while studying she taught English as a second language and has been an ESOL teacher since then. Similarly, Emily came to New Zealand as a Ph.D. student and ended up teaching English in one of the most well-known PTEs in Christchurch. Some ESOL teachers can teach without ESOL certification, as it is not a prerequisite for having an ESOL teaching job in some PTEs. Both Ruth and Paula Silva noted that they did not need to have an ESOL qualification to start their ESOL teaching career overseas and in Christchurch.

Along with the variations among teachers' qualifications, there were also variable teaching experiences ranging from novices to expert teachers. This highlights the heterogeneous repertoire of teachers' professional knowledge which facilitates ESOL teachers' teaching and professional practices. Also, this variety of teachers' experiences and educational backgrounds in the private sector were reported by participants as an aspect which affected their daily professional practices.

This heterogeneity adds to the complexity of work circumstances in PTEs, as teachers noted that they usually work in their own bubbles which were mostly limited to their students and their colleagues. Professional practice within these bubbles is driven by the individual's attempts to cope with the surrounding work environment. Therefore, it is probable that participants' work milieu has provoked isolation and individual learning practices rather than collaborative activities. This raises questions, similar to those which Walker (2014) asked, about the extent to which teachers are able to reconcile their own professional and educational beliefs with the realities of private ESOL teaching as business. Teachers' narratives in this study propose some answers to this question by discussing how this heterogeneous community of teachers interact with institutional values and perceive the role private institutions' values play in shaping their professional practice.

Figure 10.1 shows teachers' perceptions of what constitutes their immediate work context, and how aspects, such as institutional values, curriculum, colleagues and students, shape their interaction with it and with each other. These aspects have been reported as being interrelated and dynamic in a multi-layered manner. However, before explaining the interaction between these four aspects, the following sections separately describe teachers' work life experiences while they grappled with each aspect.

Figure 10.1: Teachers' perception of their immediate work context aspects in PTEs.



Grappling with institutional values

The tensions revealed in the experiences of participants interacting with institutional values formed a key thread in Mary, Sensei, and Paula Silva's cases while Ruth and Emily seemed to be more contented with institutional values. To some extent, all the participants shared the same understanding of the nature of the dominance which institutional values have gained in this particular teaching context. Teachers' narratives refer to PTEs' values as those principles, policies and procedures which drive their daily work life. For instance, Mary talked about decision making and teachers' learning opportunities, and Sensei highlighted how the interaction between PTEs' policies and business oriented practices shaped her professional knowledge. Among these aspects of what constitutes institutional values, participants focused on managerial issues while describing their interaction with PTEs' principles and policies.

Participants might have chosen to talk about managers as they directly dealt with them in comparison with business owners who do not deal directly with teachers. This is because managers represent the channel through which teachers get introduced to new policies which would drive change in their practice. Participants' experiences of interacting with their managers, who implement the institution's policy and directives, encompassed some constructs such as managerial support, bureaucratic inertia and managers' qualifications as described in their narratives. While participants in this study have agreed on the crucial role which institutions' management plays in shaping their professional practice, they reported varied attitudes towards managers' influence on their professional practice.

Ruth and Emily stated that they have been satisfied with the support they received from the institution's management, and expressed their appreciation of the reflection space and trust which management offered to them respectively. In contrast, Mary reported that she felt vulnerable and literally sick as she was threatened by her manager rather than receiving support when she was challenged by teaching issues. Paula Silva took up a different stance towards managerial support and asserted that while she enjoys a relaxed teaching atmosphere, as the management team rarely put any pressure on her, she firmly suggested that institutions' management should provoke teachers' development by providing challenging professional modules which she expected to encourage their professional learning and bring change to their professional practice.

It is noteworthy that Emily and Paula Silva worked for the same institution and were interviewed at the same time. Both participants discussed their perception of how managers'

implementation of institutional values shaped their teaching and affected their professional practice. While Emily appreciated managers' attitude of trusting her teaching abilities and giving her a free hand to control and direct her practices, Paula Silva criticised the relaxed attitude of management when it comes to teacher evaluation and classroom observations. The two participants viewed the same management behaviours from two different perspectives. Emily appreciated the absence of classroom observation, but Paula Silva criticised this and asked for more teacher observations to monitor teachers' performance. Both teachers, working for the same institution, have interpreted the same management behaviour differently. This raises the question: why would teachers working in the same institution have different perspectives of workplace policies? This might be tied to the lack of clear policies in PTEs, and raises the possible need for framing balanced and unified policies. It is also possible that both participants' work experiences and academic background played a significant role in shaping their perceptions of their immediate work environment, as Emily was less experienced than Paula Silva and they previously taught ESOL in two different parts of the world.

Similar to Mary, Sensei described PTEs as bureaucracies which nurture a culture of inertia. Managerial inertia was one of the challenges reported by participants as a part of the institutional directives and intentionality. Participant teachers noted that the institution's management adopted a condescending attitude which resulted in restricting teachers' development. Sensei, for instance, stated that managers were encouraging wrong practices such as competition rather than collaborative practices among teachers, and Mary expressed her frustration when the institution's management made her shut her eyes to what she reported as wrong student placements. Another example of managerial inertia was highlighted when Mary reported that she decided to start a further study in ESOL teaching, but her manager was reluctant to empower her to join a postgraduate diploma course. She affirmed she thought that the institution management would deter teachers from bettering their certifications, as this turns them into potential leavers who would get better job offers in other institutions.

What seemed to be a cultural clash, between what teachers believed they needed in order to support their own professional growth and what employers and managers believed as unnecessary, called attention to the gap between teachers and other stakeholders' understanding of the dynamics of ESOL teaching in PTEs. For example, it is arguable that what teachers perceived as bureaucratic practices could be justified by managers and business owners as necessary to secure the conditions which facilitate operating private organisations such as focusing teachers' attention on students' satisfaction and their academic progress. This

seemed to be a clash of interpretations of institutional policies, priorities as well as a clash of interests. This clash suggested that teachers' engagement in dialogic discussions with management and business owners would reduce the damage these bureaucracies bring to their professional practice.

Sensei presented a different case in relation to teachers' perception of the institutional support and bureaucratic inertia as she worked for two different PTEs and reported going through two opposite experiences which took place simultaneously and during the data collection period of this research study. Sensei felt grateful for the support and academic guidance she received in one institution while at the same time she was under what she described as unbearable pressure in another institution because of lack of managerial support. It is also arguable that Sensei was more successful in one institution than the other, as she could not cope with students' needs in the second institution. However, she stated that she was open to change and had already started dealing with learners' issues in the second institution before the management put high pressure on her. As described in her narrative, the tension escalated when Sensei felt a need to update her teaching techniques or teaching qualifications to address some classroom challenges, and one institution gave her complete support by freeing her from teaching and covering the cost of formal teaching certification, while the other institution blamed her for classroom issues and she felt she had to deal with challenges alone.

Another factor which was criticised by participants was managers' credentials and educational backgrounds. Mary firmly argued that her manager, who studied and taught business management courses, knew very little about ESOL teaching practices. She also thought that bureaucratic inertia could result from a lack of ESOL expertise in ESOL teaching dynamics from the manager's side. For example, for the benefit of maximising business and profit, her manager pushed her to accept new enrolments in the middle of the course regardless of students' actual competency level. She noted that she was asked to allow students to attend a higher level class, as the institution did not have a teacher to teach their actual level. While the management wanted to keep students satisfied by attending a higher class to avoid financial loss, Mary was worried about their real academic progress as well as her capability of teaching a multilevel classroom. Mary stated that if her manager had come from an ESOL background, he/she would not allow mixed levels classes to be present as this negatively affected students' learning as well as teachers' pedagogical choices. Concerning managers' qualifications, Paula Silva also highlighted the lack of qualified and certified teachers' PLD facilitators in PTEs when she talked about who supported her in-service professional learning.

This variety of perspectives adds to the understanding of the tensions associated with professional relationships between teachers and institutional policies implemented by managers. Damian Ruth (2014) in his attempt to understand higher education teacher professional practice, argued that “one needs to distinguish the practice of teaching from the apparatus that is used to provide support for teaching, or, to put it another way, to distinguish educational problems from technical or managerial problems” (p. 263). Similarly, this research study prioritised the importance of identifying the ties between teaching challenges and managerial practices in PTEs for several reasons. Firstly, teachers’ professional relationships with influences in the workplace obviously mediated their professional practice and resulted in a change in their actual teaching practices. Secondly, teachers’ perception of management support itself seemed to be mediated by the immediate teaching context, and varied from one institution to the other and also from one teacher to the other in the same institution. Thirdly, teachers’ narratives highlighted the necessity of establishing panels for discussions and dialogues between teachers and institutional management about decision making.

Teachers’ involvement in decision making seemed to be essential to understanding the position shifts, and the nature of interactions between teachers and stakeholders in their work milieu. Such involvement might also enhance the whole organisation’s performance and benefit teachers as well as students. However, the way participants perceived management support can be understood as one sided points of view of participants, as this study’s pool of participants was limited to teachers. Therefore, it could be reasonable to argue that teachers’ dissatisfaction with the management support could be due to teachers’ lack of understanding of the comprehensive circumstances which form the broader institutional policies. Managers are generally guided by the wider scope of an institution’s policy and procedures, and therefore, it is possible that some decisions are made while teachers are busy teaching. This reveals the gap between teachers’ and managers’ professional knowledge in relation to the institutional goals, policy and strategic directives. Managers are expected to have a more comprehensive understanding of these aspects, and this might explain their behaviour which was criticised by participants.

In conclusion, participants’ stories about their experiences of grappling with institutional policies, procedures, and directives suggest the value of having a continuous dialogue which boosts teachers’ inclusion in decision making on all levels: the micro level such as the number of students in each class as well as the macro level such as changing the marketing policy to open potential markets of students. However, applying this suggestion would require further

investigations around the inclusion of teachers in all levels of decision making which could increase their workload or distract them from their key task of facilitating students' academic progress and learning.

Working within their teaching bubble – isolation and independence

Participants' professional work life experiences also revealed another layer of relationships at work; participants' relationships with other teachers came as another important thread in the five narratives. All participants highlighted talking to colleagues as an important source of professional learning so they can sort out daily teaching issues. Teachers normally talk to each other about their daily challenges and discuss students' learning issues. However, participants in this study add to the understanding of teacher talk as a teacher professional learning tool.

Participants' perception of teacher talk highlighted how they got engaged with teacher talk and revealed the practical relevant limitations. Mary stated that she has become selective when it comes to sharing her professional practice issues with other teachers, as she needed to build a lot of trust with them beforehand. In contrast, Sensei affirmed that she was open to all types of discussions and was willing to talk to teachers about her teaching challenges. It is noteworthy that Mary was ready to be guided by other teachers' comments on her performance while Sensei made it clear that she would not welcome other teachers' observations before experimenting with particular practices and feeling comfortable to share ideas with others.

To understand their different stances towards teacher talk, it is important to highlight the fact that Sensei had longer teaching experience compared to Mary, and her teaching background seems to be strongly influencing her attitude of being open to different opinions but selective when it comes to inviting others to guide change in her teaching practices. Mary, the less experienced teacher, reported her perception of teacher talk as to be associated with being selective in choosing whom she talked to. This reveals the ties between teachers' past experience, beliefs, and their actual professional practices.

The above mentioned attitude of teachers towards teacher talk as a tool for change might imply that the more experienced the teachers, the more they stick to their beliefs and practices. However, Emily with fewer years of experience, was more similar to Sensei than to Mary, and confirmed that she rarely allowed teacher talk to change her classroom practices. It appears that in line with various learning theorists (Biesta, Field, Hodgkinson, Macleod, & Goodson, 2011; Billett, 2006; Furnborough, 2012) experienced teachers accepted their professional learning as a social activity which requires deep interaction with the surrounding society, or in

this case workplace community. It is also true that all participants affirmed that they do not take teachers' talk for granted, as they reported that the extent to which they incorporated colleagues' ideas into their actual practice varied.

Another aspect of teacher talk reported by participants was that it was a dynamic process which changed according to strong or weak relationships with others. For example, Mary stated clearly that she needed to trust teachers before talking to them about her professional learning needs. Paula Silva and Ruth stated that teachers' relationships can hinder or boost this learning. Both of them reported working in two different PTEs in one of which teachers' strong relationships enhanced their professional learning while in the other one there was intense competition among teachers. Therefore, when they worked with teachers who would guard their teaching resources and were not willing to share anything with others, their professional learning was minimised as well as their sense of ethical teaching. Paula Silva and Ruth also described non-sharing teaching contexts as toxic environments which negatively affect every aspect of teachers' professional practice such as professional competency and career progress.

The description of relationships at the workplace and teacher professional practice as reported by participants resonates with the description of work environment relationships by Johnson and Johnson (2009) as either promotive and/or oppositional relationships. It is also important to highlight that Sensei strongly suggested that this toxic environment can be a direct result of managers' behaviours. She affirmed that managers' behaviours might unconsciously develop a negative and competitive environment at work and among teachers rather than eliminating it. Has the work environment been affected only by managers' interpretations of policies or the private ESOL teaching imposed its particular values on both teachers and managers?

Professional relationships at work were presented across the five narratives in a way which identifies their social and political nature, as work relationships were coloured by power distribution in the workplace, as well. The role relationships play in teachers' professional practice were described as not limited to facilitating teachers' daily teaching tasks, as they seemed to expect more academic, emotional, and pedagogic guidance which required considering various approaches to facilitate and encourage teachers' getting engaged in collaborative learning activities.

Coping with students' needs and levels of satisfaction

Teachers' perception of students' satisfaction in PTEs was highlighted in the five participants' narratives. Students in PTEs were presented as a pool of multicultural students who enrolled in these courses and paid relatively high tuition fees for various goals and objectives. Almost all students were adult learners who came to New Zealand to study English and start postgraduate studies. While some of the students have been living in New Zealand and needed to improve their English language for work, others enrolled and paid fees to get a visa which would allow them to live and work in New Zealand.

All the participant teachers have expressed their sympathy to students and agreed that students should be in the centre of their attention, as they constituted the core of the educational process. Participants also stated that their attitude of sympathy towards students comes from teachers' inner sense of responsibility as teachers. However, they differently reported their experiences of achieving students' satisfaction, and dealing with how students articulate their dissatisfaction. This variety added to the understanding of students' satisfaction dynamics.

Overall, while Sensei and Paula Silva noted that handling students' expressions of satisfaction or dissatisfaction should be a shared responsibility between teachers and the institution's management, Mary and Emily emphasised that teachers should be responsible for taking care of students' needs. Differently, Ruth maintained a balanced position and asserted that while students' satisfaction was important, teachers should also keep their professional standards regardless of students' temporary wants. It is worth mentioning that Ruth differentiated between teachers' perception of students' academic needs and students' individual wants, and she prioritised students' academic needs over their wants. Ruth's attitude towards students' satisfaction or dissatisfaction adds evidence to Farmer's (2006) argument that professional ESOL teachers should be responsible for identifying students' academic needs and this might require ignoring their immediate wants.

Both Ruth and Emily reported incidents of focusing on what they, as responsible teachers, affirmed that students needed rather than satisfying their unnecessary wants. For example, Emily chose to make her students do further work in relation to critical thinking as she affirmed that students would need critical thinking in their future studies. Despite the fact that the teaching curriculum assigned by the institution rarely discusses aspects of critical thinking, Emily chose to add more work to the already overwhelmed students. In PTEs, adopting this attitude towards students' learning seems to be a high risk, as teachers expose themselves to

students' complaints and the institution's management criticism. However, both Emily and Ruth reported their ability to keep a balance between upholding students on the right learning track and pressurising them to the point that they lose their motivation and interest in learning.

Nevertheless, not all participants managed to live with the pressure of students' complaints; that student dissatisfaction brought tensions to their practices was reported by Mary and Sensei. They were challenged by the gap between their teaching practices and their students' expectations. Mary stated that she almost lost confidence in her teaching efficacy and felt the need to do further learning about pedagogy when students complained about her classes. On the other hand, Sensei noted that students' complaints in her classroom were not always connected to their academic needs. They sometimes complained about the school policy and blamed her for this. Although both Mary and Sensei perceived the causes of students' dissatisfaction differently, their perceptions nevertheless affected their professional practices deeply. They reported being under unbearable pressure resulting in major changes in their teaching practices and PLD activities.

It is important to note that the change in Mary's engagement with students' dissatisfaction was positive, as she insisted on facing this challenge and went on to be engaged in PLD activities. In contrast, Sensei felt uncomfortable working under the pressure of students' complaints and stopped teaching in this institution. The theme of treating students as customers is another key thread and was presented as a cause of the tensions which coated teachers' professional practices and it will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter where private ESOL teaching institutions are discussed as enterprises.

Engaging with curriculum

Participants reported that they tend to change teaching materials assigned by their institutions. However, their attempts to change curriculum were reported to be involved in interacting with the demands of the broader teaching context, and were described as complex and transactional. As reported by teachers, their attempts to change curriculum started generally when they identified a gap in the offered teaching materials. These discrepancies were highlighted through participants' attempts to measure curriculum against students' learning needs and/or teachers' teaching principles. For instance, Sensei noted that she was asked to teach teenage students readings about divorce rates and bankruptcy which she believed were relevant neither to their knowledge repertoire nor their interests, so she changed the topic. Ruth and Paula Silva highlighted the multilevel and multicultural range of students in ESOL classes as their motive

behind shaping and reshaping curriculum. In addition, Mary and Emily asserted that students' performance and their learning preferences next to teachers' beliefs and practices were the main drivers of their attempts to changing curriculum and adapting different teaching materials.

This intellectual and social process of identifying issues in the prescriptive curriculum, and finding a practical solution for these issues by teachers is called *curriculum deliberation* as described by Reid (1978) and Schwab (1973, 2013). While the first believed that curriculum deliberation could be an individual or a collective activity where teachers work individually or collaborate with others to enhance teaching materials (Reid, 1978), the latter asserted that curriculum development and deliberation involved a practical approach to address curriculum commonplaces which included subject matters, learners, milieus, and teachers (Schwab, 1973, 2013). Other studies (Livingston, 2007; Syarief, 2017) added to Schwab's five commonplaces and suggested the process of *curriculum making* itself as another commonplace which affects curriculum deliberation. Syarief (2017) also highlighted the connection between EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their ability to lead curriculum enhancement.

Participants' narratives in PTEs resonated with Schwab's (1973, 2013) definition of curriculum deliberation, as they fully agreed that, as teachers, they felt the importance to experience these moments of going through an in-depth analysis of weaknesses and strengths of their pedagogy and of how they utilise the available teaching materials to support students' progress. All the participants expressed the need to question the teaching material and do necessary changes either individually or collaboratively with colleagues and/or the institution's management while considering commonplaces such as students' needs, subject matters and teaching milieu. For example, Mary and Sensei expressed their ability to identify the immediate mismatch between the students' needs and the assigned teaching materials. Ruth also noted that she collaborated with her supervisors to change the curriculum of one of her classes as it was merely a list of phrasal verbs. She wanted to ensure students' engagement as well as giving them what they have paid the course fees for. Teachers' attempts to enhance curriculum were driven by the institutional requirements as well as their inner sense of responsibility, and they highlighted the latter as the main reason behind changing teaching materials. In this sense, teachers' experiences of curriculum deliberation concurred with other researchers' understanding of the process (Johnston, 1993; Livingston, 2007; Reid, 1978) which described curriculum development as "a moral undertaking rather than a technical blueprint".

However, in this study, this gap between teacher professional knowledge and demands imposed by the surrounding teaching context, including students, was reported to bring tensions to teachers' professional lives. In relation to how they dealt with these tensions, participants reported adopting different strategies and techniques to construct and reconstruct curriculum which varied according to their different teaching beliefs, experiences, and workplaces. Emily asserted that she preferred to go online, learn individually, and find learning resources; compare, and filter a range of learning materials for students as well as for her own learning. She affirmed that she had the professional enablers which facilitated her learning and enhanced her materials hunting skills. Sensei also showed an autonomous attitude towards dealing with curriculum and changing classroom teaching materials. Paula Silva, Mary, and Ruth stated that they would go and check forums, discuss ideas with other teachers, get engaged in peer observation, and get some mentoring from others.

Another key aspect this study added to the understanding of how participants dealt with curriculum adaption is through utilising their past experience, including their prior teaching, and their own time as a student. While most of the five focus teachers drew mainly on their past experience as teachers, Emily was different. She used her experience both as a student and a teacher simultaneously. She noted that she replicated the solutions and practices which she used to face academic challenges as a student in guiding students' learning and making decisions about curriculum change. She stated that she was reflective and chose from her past experiences what suits the students, but she repeatedly stated that the knowledge she gained as a student observing her teachers guided her professional practice to a large extent.

For some other participants, the concept of past experience expanded beyond their individual experience as teachers or even students. For example, Sensei and Emily talked about their awareness of students' cultural and social backgrounds. Being aware of students' past learning experiences provided enough knowledge for them to sort out classroom issues. They used students' cultural backgrounds and past experiences to direct their professional practice inside the classroom. For example, when Sensei taught Japanese students, she watched Japanese TV and learned more about Japanese people's customs and traditions. Past experience as reported in participants' narratives expanded the understanding of teacher past experience and curriculum deliberation. It is noteworthy that teachers also reported that they questioned and amended old techniques before applying them to their classes. All the participants highlighted considering trial and error techniques when they replicate their own or other teachers' past experiences. This implies teachers' awareness of the importance of being reflective on which

of their past techniques would work with which students. It is not merely an imitation of what worked in the past, but a process of considering the actual cultural and social teaching milieu, as well.

It would be ambitious, probably unfair, and unrealistic to ask for a unified curriculum in all PTEs in the presence of the currently offered course books and online teaching materials utilised in ESOL teaching. However, it is necessary to create a professional common ground for teachers in PTEs to act as a starting point. Such a professional common ground should serve teachers' learning when they need to interact with curriculum or pedagogy, and simultaneously consider the discussed commonplaces. This raises the questions about which commonplaces this common ground would prioritise. Livingston (2007) suggested the need of an eclectic approach towards curriculum deliberation arguing that "a prescriptive curriculum surely does not solve a curriculum dilemma, nor will an indeterminate philosophy by itself be enough to get the practical aspects done. What is needed is an amalgam of perspectives that congeal into a cogent pathway for others to use as they navigate the deliberative process".

Having said that, these differences in teachers' attitudes towards curriculum development implied a lack of systematic curriculum design and development standards. Although there are internationally accepted ESOL teachers' certification programmes such as CELTA, ESOL, and DELTA, which include sections on curriculum development and course materials adaptation theories, participants' narratives suggest the need to have practical and locally modified versions of curriculum deliberation standards, institution based curriculum development policies, which guide and support teachers' interaction with curriculum and their own teaching practices in response to their particular teaching contexts. The discussion of the extent to which ESOL can be considered as a particular teaching context will be addressed in this chapter in more detail.

Aspects of work context in PTEs

On a micro level, participants' narratives highlighted how teachers identify, perceive, and interact with key aspects of the surrounding environment. As stated above, teachers identified and dealt with aspects of their immediate work context such as institutional values, colleagues, curriculum, and students. While the above sections describe teachers' perceptions of what aspects constitute their immediate work context, the following section gives examples of how these four aspects interact with each other to form conditions in which teachers operate and defines the focus of their performance. These four aspects interact with each other and overlap

in a multidimensional manner to construct and reconstruct teachers' understanding of the surrounding necessities of work context which direct their professional practice.

Before describing how these four aspects interact, it is necessary to highlight that participant narratives have described PTEs as workplaces which were built on a specific business model targeted towards specific utilitarian goals, the most significant among them is generating profit for shareholders/owners. Therefore, while these goals include achieving a specific level of academic standards controlled by external examining organisations such as NZQA, they still operate under the pressure of revenue maximising. The perceptions of teachers are that PTEs owners are businesspeople in the first place who seek a gross revenue to cover expenses such as salaries of staff and utilities on a monthly basis. Although teachers' perception of private ESOL teaching organisations as businesses is discussed in detail later in this chapter, it is necessary to refer to it here, as this range of financial responsibilities drives stakeholders' priorities and decision making, brings tensions, and puts pressure on teachers. Particularly in PTEs, goals are defined through these financial priorities, and directly affect the interaction between these four aspects of the private ESOL teaching context.

Taking curriculum adaptation and social formations in PTEs as an example, the sociocultural fabric of PTEs interacts with teachers' decisions about curriculum adaptation. This sociocultural fabric encompasses a complex mixture of people who have various social, cultural, and educational backgrounds, among both teachers and students, which creates a specific ESOL context within private PTEs. This mixture of people adds to the complexity and multidimensionality of teachers' professional practice, and plays a key role in shaping and reshaping teachers' professional choices especially when it comes to course material adaptation.

Another level of interaction between work context aspects was highlighted when participants described their efforts to achieve students' satisfaction and abide by the overarching institutional policy. Participants' stories resonated with Walker's (2014) description of interaction among various aspects of the work context in PTEs in New Zealand such as students as fee paying clients in relation to private institutional policies and procedures. This study suggests that business owners, as well as managers in these private institutions, would put revenue generation on the top of their priorities, and this brings students satisfaction to the centre of the educational process as they are the only paying group, that is the revenue generating centre, in this type of organisations. This might give students significantly more

power than teachers and managers in defining what should be taught and how, and give their complaints the ability to override teachers' decisions about specific learning activities which would be based on sound educational practice or overarching ESOL learning goals. For example, Mary noted that she felt pressured to accept novice level students in intermediate level courses, or to change assessment results to avoid students' complaints.

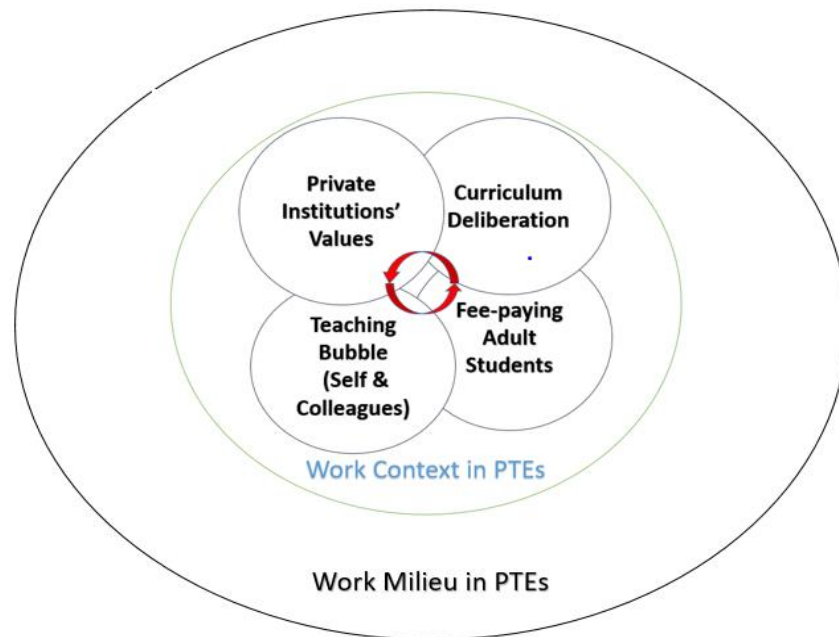
Mary was not the only participant to speak to this pressure, Sensei also reported feeling pressured to treat students as fee paying clients, rather than learners, and ultimately rejected the concept of the "customer is always right" as a reasonable stance within education. The tension described in teachers' narratives strongly resonates with Walker's (2014) ideas about teachers' attempts to reconcile their educational principles with the profit laden business values in PTEs. The interaction between these two value propositions presents PTEs as different from other ESOL teaching contexts such as schools and universities, which are subsidised by the government and where students and teachers might suffer less from this constant pressure of revenue generation. The way participants described their own perceptions of interactions among work context aspects resonates with research on education (Biesta et al., 2011; Cranton, 2016; Day, 2018; Wette, 2010) which noted that teachers' professional practice is a socially situated activity, and connected to other aspects of the broader teaching context which expand beyond their teaching context to shape their work milieu.

Teachers' narratives revealed teachers' perceptions of institutional values, colleagues, curriculum and students, and described interactions among these four aspects to form a particular work environment in PTEs. In addition, teachers' narratives have not ignored the broader teaching context, known in this research project as work milieu, which includes other social factors which affect teachers' professional practice. The ESOL teaching work milieu was discussed by Bowl (2017) when she argued that "adult educators' practice is not only influenced by international and national discourses and policies, however. Their ideas about the aims of education are also likely to have been shaped by their biographies, their educational backgrounds, their personal and professional experiences and those of their peers".

The importance of investigating teachers' perceptions of their social work milieu is essential to the understanding of the targeted phenomenon, as their stories asserted the strong ties between their professional practice and what takes place outside the walls of PTEs. Figure 10.2 illustrates how these four aspects form the immediate work context of ESOL teachers in PTEs, and shows the relationship between teachers' immediate work context and the broader work

milieu which will be discussed in the following sections. The following sections first describe two noteworthy incidents, albeit taking place outside PTEs, that have effects on ESOL teaching and teachers' professional practice in New Zealand. Then, move on to describe teachers' perceptions of dynamics of the wider teaching milieu.

Figure10.2: Teachers' perception of the wider ESOL teaching milieu



Mosques shooting and COVID-19

The timeframe for completing this study was four years from 2016 to 2020. The last two years of the study witnessed two significant incidents; the first was the local terror attack and the second was the global pandemic. On March 15th, 2019 the whole world was shocked by the massacre at the two mosques of fifty one unarmed and defenseless worshipers in Al-Nur and Linwood mosques in Christchurch. Then, approximately one year later, COVID-19 began to claim lives around the world like no other epidemic seen in our lifetime. These two incidents have not affected data collection directly, but I chose to acknowledge them and discuss how they have affected private ESOL teaching in general and how they would affect the findings of this research study in particular and similar studies. I thought it is important to highlight their adverse effects, as external influences including natural disasters such as earthquakes and epidemics seemed to be strongly connected to teachers' professional practice.

The mosque shooting took place in the middle of my data collection, and two of my participants were Muslim. Fortunately, neither of them was directly affected by the accident, but I believe that our third interview could have been longer and yielded richer data if the mosque shooting

had not happened. It is noteworthy that, immediately after the mosque shooting, the number of international students in Christchurch quickly shrank and so did the number of in-service teachers. Thus, if I were still trying to recruit teachers for this research study, their willingness to participate would be considerably less in such circumstances. These devastating terror attacks will always occupy a vast space in the reflections of the New Zealand communities, teachers, and students. A kiwi couple who came to attend funerals and support the Muslim community asked me about what my Ph.D. is about and I said education. Then, they said, “that is what New Zealand really needs to stop these horrific incidents”.

Approximately a year after the mosque shooting, the news reported a fatal virus had started in China and was starting to spread around the whole world. The New Zealand government chose to apply early and strict border closure procedures which meant no international students would be able to come to New Zealand. PTEs around the whole country were waiting for the border closure to end, so they could start recruiting international students and teach on campus again after some trials to teach online. Although my data collection was complete at the time of COVID-19, I was still in contact with some PTEs’ principals as an EAP teacher. When I talked to a PTE’s principal about their organisation’s reaction to COVID-19, they told me about severe restructuring to reduce spending and this included making a large number of ESOL teachers redundant. They said that private businesses cannot afford to keep paying teachers’ salaries under these circumstances. They need to just take the risk, and hope that they can hire the same teachers again as soon as the business flourishes. I thought about what if I were still collecting data, and how difficult it would be to maintain access to participants at the time when they had lost their jobs.

The massive changes which the market of ESOL has witnessed in these two years show how fragile the private ESOL market is. PTEs are financially dependent on international students, and when these students are pushed to leave or being banned from entering the country, these organisations find themselves in a critical position. Although the New Zealand government offered financial aid to support the private sector, ceasing spending on activities such as teachers’ professional learning and development was inevitable.

As highlighted earlier, in relation to this research study, the mosque shooting and COVID-19 could have affected teachers’ professional practice, changed the data I collected and could have changed the pool of participants, as many ESOL teachers in the private sector have lost their

jobs. The amount of data would also be affected, as maintaining access to participants would be not possible during this time of the epidemic, lockdown and social distancing.

The work milieu of ESOL teachers seems to be not limited to their teaching context inside PTEs, as what happens outside the institutions affects teachers' professional practices. The consequences of these two incidents will most likely affect the ESOL teaching market in Christchurch as well as the whole world for much longer than we might expect. Psychologically, people may think twice before spending money on education and travelling which are both necessary for the international ESOL market to be viable. The experience of COVID-19 could affect people's behaviours and financial planning for a long time, even after the world is virus free or after a COVID-19 vaccine is found. This raises the question of what exactly the boundaries of the ESOL teaching work milieu are. The following section discusses how the interrelated aspects of the wider private ESOL teaching context shaped and reshaped participants' perceptions of their professional practice.

Private ESOL teaching as business

The context of this research study was private training establishments in Christchurch and how teachers there perceived work life experiences. The representations of teachers and the reconstruction of their personal experiences highly emphasised the role work context played in shaping the way in which they operated. To refer to this work context, this study used terms such as work environment, work conditions, work surroundings, and work circumstances to refer to specific aspects of work context while the broader work context was referred to as work milieu. The following sections focus on the wider ESOL teaching milieu in which participants of this research project operated.

The five narratives have woven stories and threads together to present a real life description of private tertiary ESOL institutions as a particular work milieu. By describing their interaction with the surrounding community, teachers explicitly have highlighted key characteristics of private ESOL teaching as well as constraints under which they worked. This resonates with Walker's (2011a) description of private ESOL teaching as a sector which is not subsidised by the government and has its unique work circumstances including its professional structure which encompasses a group of multicultural and multinational students as well as teachers. This section describes teachers' perception of how external aspects such as the economic, sociocultural, and political aspects of work milieu have affected participants' professional practice and development.

A recurring theme in this study is the characteristics of ESOL teachers' work lives in private establishments which included the tension between ESOL as business and the profession's educational and social values. Students as paying clients came as the most important feature of PTEs as enterprises. Almost all participants accepted the notion that students should be treated as paying clients, and chose to take a sympathetic and responsible stance towards them. As reported in participants' narratives, students are the engine of the whole industry through whose payments other parties such as teachers, managers and admission staff were energised to keep operating.

However, participants' attitudes towards accepting the current practices of PTEs dealing with students as customers vary. Some teachers saw the profit motive as being able to foster better outcomes for students, while others argued against viewing students as "customers" and called for maintaining an educative view. Emily, Paula Silva and Ruth were clearly of this first view. For example, Emily highlighted the importance of maintaining students' satisfaction to the best possible level, and she noted that she did this out of her feelings of sympathy for students as she was an international student herself. Paula Silva confidently noted that private ESOL teaching should be operated as a business, and teachers should accept the idea that PTEs are *money making machines* in the eyes of their owners.

Similar to Paula Silva, Ruth stressed the responsibility of the PTEs to care for their customers' needs and she stated that their customers are primarily students. Both Paula Silva and Ruth confirmed that they fully agreed that students have paid a lot of money and they should get a service which satisfies their academic needs in return. They went further to argue that bringing the business model to ESOL teaching could positively impact teachers' professional practice, as they thought that teachers and PTEs would always be striving to become better service providers. In addition, Ruth noted that this would maximise the teacher's role in institutions' management by sharing the responsibility of achieving the institutional business goals.

On the other hand, Sensei and Mary have criticised dealing with students as customers simply because they pay tuition fees. For example, Sensei resisted the institution's management one sided attitude towards students' complaints and rejected the concept of *customer is always right* in this specific educational context. She affirmed that applying these values to education is neither helpful for students' learning nor teachers' professional development, and turns PTEs into *money driven* identities which chose to decline their professionalism to below the *bottom line* which threatens to affect the quality of teaching negatively.

Mary also criticised PTEs when they are merely driven by income generation, revenue maximising, and students' retention rates which were reported to affect teachers' professional practice. She specifically stated that in her case, these policies ruined her professional as well as personal life. Mary suggested that there is a need to enact a law that organises PTEs ownership and eliminate those PTEs which are purely owned by businessmen. In her view, PTEs should have *double ownership* in which the owners should include ESOL qualified members next to businessmen so they can balance the business values to education principles when it comes to making critical decisions. Both Mary and Sensei agreed that PTEs treated students as customers, and considered this as one of the weaknesses of PTEs which should be dealt with.

These different attitudes of teachers towards the construct of *students as customers* is not unique to this research study. The notion, on whether accepting students as paying customers is a part of education's neoliberal transformation or rejecting this idea of other business values are necessary for educational success, has always been controversial (Kauppinen, 2014; Rodan, 2016; Ruth, 2018; Walker, 2005). Thus, it is critical for ESOL teaching courses and ESOL training programmes designers to develop an understanding of how complex ESOL teaching circumstances are in PTEs. These teachers' behaviours, as described by the participants, highlighted the tension between private businesses and concepts of social good. It is noteworthy that both fields of business management and education have become more interrelated in the past decade due to the neoliberal transformation of higher education as discussed by Walker (2011a, 2013, 2014). Neoliberalism in higher education in this study presented characteristics of private ESOL teaching institutions in which teachers had to balance their roles between ensuring educative norms and meeting demands of commercial services.

Having said that there are voices such as Ruth, the researcher, (2018) who called to maintain education as a humanistic activity and not to be mixed with business rules, as this might wrongly give generating revenue higher priority compared to ethics and principles of education. However, Ruth's (2018) studies examined the government funded sector, his ideas are still valuable to the private sector. In clear contrast, some participants of this research study decided to accept the fact that private education institutions have been applying business values to achieve both revenue and social good at the same time. Participants such as Ruth and Paula Silva stated that business values could enhance organisations' autonomy and flexibility. They also argued that this would consequently improve the quality of students' learning experiences.

Especially when teachers apply business concepts such as customer service and customer satisfaction principles to their daily teaching practices.

Based on the five narratives, participants reflected the views of the above mentioned ideological stances which mirror participants' perceptions. On the one hand, the supporters of *keep business out of education* such as Mary and Sensei rejected the idea of education to be driven by business principles such as *customer is always right* which is one of the key pillars of enterprises. They affirmed that adopting this attitude towards students which is a money driven approach, would minimise the humanitarian factor of education and oppress teachers' innovative practices. On the other hand, Ruth and Paula Silva affirmed that stakeholders and specifically owners invest their money and time in a competitive market of private education, so they opt to independently achieve maximum revenue and achieve financial sustainability away from the government, as they do not get much funding or sometimes no funding at all from it. This is while they still have large expenses to cover such as venue rent, salaries, and taxes. As such, they reflected more alignment with the neoliberal argument that providers do not have the luxury of completely focusing on educational values and ethics while financial commitments and market competition are heavy burdens which rest squarely on their shoulders and threaten businesses ability to sustainably operate. So, they firmly noted that they believed it is reasonable for revenue to occupy the centre of owners' and managers' attention in PTEs.

It is also important to highlight that participants' stories implied that maximising revenue could also require reducing spending to the possible minimum level. This financially driven attitude might result in a different hierarchy of priorities in PTEs compared to government funded organisations. All participants stated that PTEs, as part of the private sector, are most likely to be associated with limited resources. PTEs were reported to allocate a tight budget for teacher learning resources. Therefore, participants' professional practice was affected by the financial constraints of PTEs which reflected the lack of facilities and services. Teachers reported their efforts to utilise the existing resources in order to bring about positive change in students' lives and remain committed to their professional and inner sense of responsibility.

Peredo and Chrisman (2006) discussed the relationship between businesses and social communities, and argued that the lack of resources pushes the social enterprises as well as individuals into finding innovative ways of using existing resources and acquiring new resources in order to achieve financial sustainability and generate social outcomes. Participants in this research study acknowledged facing challenges of limited resources, and shared their

varied views on whether the status of *lack of resources* should be accepted and dealt with or just be rejected by teachers. While Mary and Sensei criticised and showed resistance to accepting the idea of lack of resources, Ruth and Paula Silva accepted that as part of their teaching conditions.

It is noteworthy that participants who accepted business values in PTEs were able to show more understanding of some hardships and were able to teach with less pressure. Emily the bricoleur, as well as Paula Silva's and Ruth's perceptions of dynamics of the private ESOL teaching, provides more evidence to Peredo and Chrisman's (2006) understanding of the relationship between limited resources and teachers' attempts to innovatively utilise whatever available around them. This raises the question of the importance of opening channels of dialogues between teachers, managers and business owners, so they can obtain a broader understanding of private ESOL teaching dynamics and improve PTEs organisational performance.

It is also fair to argue that some of those who are against applying business values to education still benefit from the revenue generated in educational enterprises. Kauppinen (2014) argued that while academics do not treat their intellectual works such as articles and books as commodities by selling them in markets for money, they may create some revenue by selling consultation services, lectures or workshops in markets including the private sector. In addition, some of those who oppose education commodification would borrow some business values such as valuing parents' and students' feedback and consider their ideas while designing reform and change plans for the public sector.

Having said that, it is noteworthy to say that the alternative to revenue directed educational organisations could be that the governments dedicate substantive budgets to serve education and ensure that teachers do not have to work under the pressure of maximising revenue. This might mean education would be provided to students through financial subsidy. In my experience, some rich countries such as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates which own massive resources and spend generously on public and private education, have recently changed their educational policy from directly funding universities and institutions to considering new business models which would allow them to start creating revenue so as to become financially independent from the government. My discussion of private ESOL as business drew on studies and ideas from government funded organisations. Although these are two different work environments, these studies illuminated the basic aspects which drive the

relationship between revenue generating and education principles in both private and public sectors.

Thus, it is arguably unhealthy to turn education into a totally financially dependent field while it can work wisely towards financial independency. Some literature (Fredriksson, 2009; Kauppinen, 2014; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006; Rodan, 2016) highlighted financial dependency as a possible reason behind reducing innovation among educational organisations and suggested that allowing them to become financially independent would increase their resilience and autonomy. Paula Silva and Ruth highlighted some aspects of private ESOL teaching as agents which provoked best practices among teachers and institution's managers such as market competition and customer satisfaction. Business values in education were viewed as incentives to enhance the quality and outcomes of education in PTEs by both Paula Silva and Ruth.

Having said that, the data from the study appears to suggest the need to have a balanced attitude towards keeping the work life in PTEs healthy and profitable for students, teachers, business owners and shareholders. The idea of merging and marrying business values to humanistic principles is not new either to the New Zealand private education sector or to the business management field. The ability to merge social goals with enterprises has been tackled by and existed in post-school ESOL teaching for a long time. For example, English Language Partners (ELP) is a post-school language institution in New Zealand with around 22 centres nationwide. Its branches aim to help new Kiwis to learn the English Language which they need to integrate into the New Zealand society and live independent lives. English Language Partners has specific social objectives which it strives to achieve together with some revenue generation, as well (ELPNZ, 2020). Not only non-profitable organisations aim to achieve social goals, but PTEs also have serving migrants and international students among their goals, although they charge for the service.

Domenico et al. (2010) referred to this type of business as social enterprises which “share the pursuit of revenue generation with organisations in the private sector as well as the achievement of social goals of non-profit organisations”. In doing so, some organisations might manage to blur the boundaries between the private and non-profit organisations. To what extent can PTEs benefit from this balanced attitude? Stakeholders in PTEs need to understand the actual relationship between revenue making and educational social goals. On the other side of the coin, teachers need to understand their role in supporting the commercial and financial goal

achieving of the organisation as a whole to act as effective players in their organisations. Simultaneously, they maintain educational principles and humanistic and social dimensions of ESOL teaching to their best standards. This resonates strongly with Walkers' (Walker, 2011a, 2011b, 2014) ideas about the service logic in ESOL when he accepted ESOL private teaching as a professional service which combines the best of both worlds, customer care with revenue making, humanistic principles which do not contradict fun learning and students' satisfaction.

Teacher resilience building in relation to their identity, agency

Throughout the five narratives, participants' stories about their professional practice and how they interacted with their work milieu highlight identity formation, sense of agency and building resilience as recurring themes. They present a portrait of teachers' moments of facing challenges, fighting for their existence as teachers, coping with stress, maintaining commitment, making decisions, and acting accordingly. I chose to address teacher identity, agency and resilience in this section as they are introduced in participants' narratives as interrelated aspects of ESOL teachers' work milieu. While it is logical to accept these three aspects as being mainly driven by teachers' own inner call or moral sense, participants' narratives add to the understanding of identity, agency and resilience by presenting them as socially situated, dynamic and interrelated. In the five narratives, these themes were introduced as being not only the responsibility of individual teachers, but a shared responsibility of the broader ESOL teaching work milieu which includes ESOL teachers, institutions' management, and PTEs' owners, in addition to students.

My decision to address teachers' resilience, identity and agency as interrelated aspects was guided by Engestrom's (2001) ideas about the understanding of teachers' professional practice which should not be reduced to a number of short term goals, as it is a *[moving target]* which exists in a dynamic context of socially and politically interrelated aspects. In addition to this, Biesta and others (2011), while studying adult learning chose to focus on the role of learning throughout the life course, and recommended that we "always take a life course perspective on learning and its many contexts and purposes" (p. 3). Therefore in this section I chose to discuss how teacher identity (who teachers think they are), sense of agency (describing their ability to exert control over their professional lives), and resilience building (their ability to bounce back, gain and honour commitment, and demonstrate their best teaching practices) interacted and affected their professional practice.

To begin with, when I asked participants about the reasons why they chose to care for their students and do their best to demonstrate their teaching best practices, all participants' responses reflected their understanding of the role their sense of identity plays in their professional practice. Although they referred to their inner sense of being responsible teachers, their stories show to what extent the surrounding work environment matters. This highlights the interaction between both internal and external influences, as described by teachers, such as the tensions between their sense of identity and contributing to institutional goals. Paula Silva and Mary, for instance, chose to remain committed to the teaching role regardless of getting an unrewarding salary, as they felt responsible for their students' learning and academic progress. Their sense of identity as responsible teachers acted as a motive to keep them in the profession despite the economic challenges.

In addition, Sensei's sense of belonging and connectedness to a specific workplace supported her identity formation within this specific work environment. In contrast, she reported experiencing identity loss when she felt she was being oppressed by management decisions to provide unconditional support to students in a different PTE. Sensei reported that because of power related political challenges such as the pressure of accepting students as customers who are always right, she gave up on the teaching role and resigned from this particular PTE.

From a social perspective, Ruth presented a different example of teacher identity as she noted that she perceived teaching as a professional role which she plays in the lives of her students and not merely a job from which she earns her living. Therefore, she believes that teachers should support students to achieve their academic goals, and bring real change to their lives. For Ruth teaching is a passion, as she is always driven by her inner moral sense of her being a teacher. Emily's sense of identity was associated with her autonomy and dependency, as she believes in her professional practices and trusts what she knows about ESOL teaching. To sum this up, participants' narratives present different perceptions of identity formation which was mediated by and also influenced their actual teaching practices.

Teacher identity formation is presented differently in the five narratives, it is nevertheless present among all the participants. This suggests that one's teacher identity is a likely source of one's sense of resilience, which in turn suggests the parallel argument that the loss of identity might weaken teacher resilience. The stories of teachers taking the responsibility of improving their students' academic skills raise questions about the role of the work environment forming teachers' resilience, and the extent to which understanding the nature of teachers' resilience

may be important for organisations. Some studies investigate the interrelated relationship between teacher identity and building resilience (Gilmore, Welsh, & Loton, 2019; Izadinia, 2018; Kong, 2014; Liu & Xu, 2013) and have noted that teacher resilience formation is connected to other aspects of *collective influences* of the work milieu in which teachers operate. Therefore, it is important to highlight the role the surrounding environment plays in forming teacher identity and fostering their resilience.

Teacher identity and resilience as described in the five narratives brought to the surface the tensions between the ways teacher identity was perceived by stakeholders. Teacher identity as perceived by teachers (e.g. I am a skilful educator) seemed to be different from the way it was implied in policies (e.g. I should contribute to the institutional goals), or challenged by the actual teaching practice (e. g. I need to keep my job and maintain my good reputation). This is captured by Mary when she noted that she was simultaneously challenged by the fact that she wanted to maintain the image of a skilful teacher in the eyes of students, while she needed to meet the obligations to adhere to the institutional goals driven and revenue maximising. She reported that she had to teach multilevel classrooms to save the institution the cost of opening a new class, and accepted institutional circumstances by shifting roles in order to keep her job and maintain a good relationship with the institution management.

Some studies (Stronach et al., 2002; Walker, 2011a) highlighted the tensions teacher professional identity formation faces in a context driven by commercial as well as educational priorities which presented inevitable clashes between concepts of *economy of performance* which refers to business aspects of the profession such as maximising revenue and *ecologies of practice* which refer to its educational principles including teacher identity formation (Stronach et al., 2002). Although these tensions between the commercial side of ESOL and its educational and social goals could be perceived as drawbacks of ESOL teaching, the participants' narratives have not always presented them as negative aspects of private ESOL teaching. The tensions were also viewed by participants as an essential part of teachers' ability to demonstrate resilience, as these tensions and negotiation of identity seem to strengthen teachers' abilities to remain firmly committed to their teaching responsibilities despite adverse work circumstances.

The five narratives have also highlighted the complicated relationship between teacher agentic actions and their sense of resilience. The participants' sense of agency and agentic practices enhanced their sense of commitment and supported their ability to fight off challenges.

Although they reported facing challenges and having to work with limited resources at times, almost all teachers firmly believed in their abilities and capabilities to teach and guide their students' learning and academic progress. Paula Silva, Ruth and Sensei firmly noted that they made conscious and individual decisions reflecting on how the teaching materials suit students' needs. They also acted accordingly by adopting teaching materials and applying different classroom teaching techniques which supported their students' progress. Mary also reported that she took control over her professional learning and development and guided other teachers' learning when she felt that nobody else would support them. Presenting a different example of fostering agency, Emily chose to trust her past experience, her own learning techniques as a student, and what she knew about teaching to guide her own professional practices as a teacher. She noted that she had the same experience as an international postgraduate student which allowed her to take decisions which she perceived as helpful to students' progress and simultaneously supported her ability to cope and interact with institutional circumstances.

In the five narratives, the relationship between teacher agency and resilience is emphasised as strongly connected aspects of teachers' professional practice, and as something that cannot be separated from their social milieu. Gilmore and others (2019) asserted the strong connection between teacher agency and their ability to successfully interact with challenges of the surrounding environment, and called for expanding the definition of resilience to include teachers' capacity to collaborate with others to enhance their work conditions (p. 443). This raises a question about the responsibility of fostering teacher resilience at the workplace. Whose responsibility is it to create an agentic and resilient teacher community in an organisation?

After discussing how teachers' stories have highlighted the ties between building resilience, identity formation, and sense of agency, participants' narratives also revealed sources of resilience in a way which indicates its complexity. Participants' successful experiences also appeared to enable teachers to deal with the hardships which add to expanding the way we perceive and implement teacher resilience. For example, Mary noted that her students' success was among the reasons why she stayed committed to the job. She talked about the moments when they showed proof of learning and shared their appreciation with her. Paula Silva also talked about how maintaining successful professional work relationships with colleagues and mentors enhanced her sense of commitment and belonging.

Although reviewed research studies suggested different views on the sources of teacher resilience, teachers' narratives of this research study add to the understanding of teacher resilience. On the one hand, Doney (2013) suggested that hardships and extremely adverse circumstances are essential for the formation of teachers' resilience, claiming that "without stress, the resilience building process cannot occur. Stressors and protective factors not only facilitate the process that builds resilience, but also are necessary for the process to take place" (p. 659). On the other hand, Gu and Day (2007, 2013) argued that resilience is a socially situated phenomenon which emerges from the interaction between teachers and the surrounding teaching context, and it is "much more than a capacity to survive and thrive in extremely adverse circumstances" (p. 22). This study's findings seem to add more evidence to Gu and Day's (2007, 2013) argument.

Having said that, the notion that successful experiences can contribute to teacher resilience may expand PTE stakeholders' understanding of teacher resilience building, and open the door for organisations to plan a broader range of in-house activities which could boost teacher resilience such as highlighting and rewarding successful experiences rather than just waiting for hardship to provoke teachers' resilience. In addition, this moves teacher resilience building from merely accepting the concept of bouncing back after facing hardships and presenting suffering as essential to build teachers' resilience. In summary, while accepting the role hardships play in building teachers' resilience, successful experiences and rewarding innovative practices seemed to be connected to teachers' resilience and commitment as well.

What positive circumstances can organisations secure to enhance teachers' sense of resilience? A balanced work environment could avoid teachers' burnout, and enhance their resilience through collaborative and successful experiences. It is not only stressors which create an opportunity of fostering teachers' resilience, but a range of motivating practices can support teachers' sense of resilience, too. This strongly resonates with the studies (Day, 2018; Gilmore et al., 2019) of *[collective influences]* which include external and internal factors, stressors and protective actions which teachers adopt to develop a sense of resilience in a context of ongoing change such as private higher education organisations.

Teachers' in-service professional learning pathways and choices

One of the key themes in participants' narratives was about teachers' perceptions of what constituted their own theory-in-action, and how this affected their professional practice. Some literature (Abbott, 2006; Fitzsimons, 1997; Walker, 2011a) noted that ESOL teachers, similar

to other professional groups, have accumulated experiences to build their own theory-in-action through which they managed their own practices, and probably define some principles of their profession. This highlights the importance of investigating in-service professional learning pathways as they were described in participants' narratives.

Walker (2011a) argued that teachers are “the major human capital and the lifeblood” of PTEs, as they are the main facilitators of students' learning. Therefore, their practiced theories in action would define their approach towards facilitating students' academic progress. In this study, teachers' theory-in-action is defined as a mixture of teachers' professional knowledge, in-service professional learning, qualification and intellectual skills (Walker, 2011a, p. 308). Similarly, the five narratives discussed participants' own theory-in-action, and revealed the relationship between their professional knowledge which drove their professional practice. This section describes participants' motives, pathways, and decisions in relation to facing work life challenges.

As stated in their narratives, teachers' decisions which drove the formulation of their own theory-in-action showed how they were engaged in professional learning and development (PLD) activities. All participants reported a lack of academic guidance or clear institutional procedures which would control and direct their performance in PTEs. For example, teachers' in-service professional learning was presented as minimally systematic and spontaneous compared to systematic formal learning activities of ESOL teachers offered by ESOL certification identities such as the British Council. Participants noted that the sources of their in-service PLD basically included colleagues' informal discussions, past teaching and learning experiences, and the teachers' own individual online learning attempts.

This range of professional knowledge sources of in-service teachers was reported to limit participants' professional knowledge to what they can reach and what the internet would offer. It is reasonable to argue that limiting ESOL teachers' professional knowledge in PTEs to whatever the surrounding environment provides would not leave enough space for innovative practices. This raises questions about the accountability and expansiveness of teachers' in-service professional learning and to what extent their current in-service learning practices equip them to professionally facilitate students' learning and academic progress.

While Ferrier-Kerr (2019) studied beginning school teachers' PLD dynamics, her findings can inform post-school teaching. She noted that while long-life learning requires specific skills such as decision making and reflectivity, teachers' professional learning was mainly triggered

by their need to bring order and consistency to their practice. Although this description of teachers' in-service learning presents it as merely a reaction to challenges, she has criticised focusing teachers' professional learning around their attempts to survive daily demands of work life, and argued that it would limit their professional learning to what Argyris and Schon (1974) described as *single loop learning* (p. 306). Ferrier-Kerr's (2019) findings resonate with this research study findings, as participants revealed the nature of their professional learning as simply reacting to *new challenges arise*. This implies that their professional knowledge was also limited to what is available as reported by Paula Silva.

Teachers' in-service PLD choices, as described in the stories of participants, were complex and multi-layered within which a continuous and socially situated process was involved. The findings of this study, as well as my own experience, indicated that teacher in-service learning is an ongoing process; teachers continuously learn both consciously and unconsciously on regular basis by reacting to challenges and interacting with students' needs. Freeman and Johnson (1998) suggested that ESOL teachers "Whether entering their classrooms with formal professional training or simply on the basis of their command of English, they embark on a process of learning to teach". In addition, teacher in-service professional learning was highlighted as a socially situated and continuous process by Mills (2019) who noted that teaching is a difficult job which requires ongoing negotiation of meaning with students, colleagues, and interacting with the broader teaching milieu which requires intellectual and emotional labour as well. Participants in this study such as Mary, Sensei and Ruth chose to adopt an unsystematic critical stance towards the surrounding environment to figure out puzzles of their professional practice. Moreover, all participants reported that they reflected on their past experiences and utilised evidence-informed approach to sort out most of their work life issues.

Having said that, it is important to indicate that there is not much empirical evidence, especially in post high school education, on whether such an unsystematic teacher learning would benefit teachers beyond the needs of their immediate needs, and contribute to their sustainable professionalism. For example, Ruth noted that she abandoned some of her professional practices when she moved from one institution to the other as an example of an immediate learning experience which was directed by institutional policies, and resulted in a temporary change in her professional practice which she ceased as soon as she moved to another institution. Therefore, this raises questions about the sustainability of this unsystematic learning in the long term. Sensei also reported that teachers "learn what they want to do, and

learn what they do not want to do”. In this statement, she referred to the equal opportunities for the supportive and adverse impact such a private teaching milieu might have on teachers’ professional practice.

Whose responsibility is it to facilitate teachers’ PLD, secure proper channels of collaborative learning, and eliminate unprofessional practices? The simple answer to this question might point a finger at the organisations or PTEs, but, in a private enterprise, there are limitations to these suggestions. As discussed in participants’ narratives, there was a lack of systematic guidance and coherent policies to facilitate the enhancement of their professional practice. Business values and maximising revenue would possibly take the blame for this lack of professional guidance, as PTEs were reported to reduce the budget of teachers’ PLD, if there is any, in favour of other ESOL teaching aspects such as marketing, curriculum, and assessment.

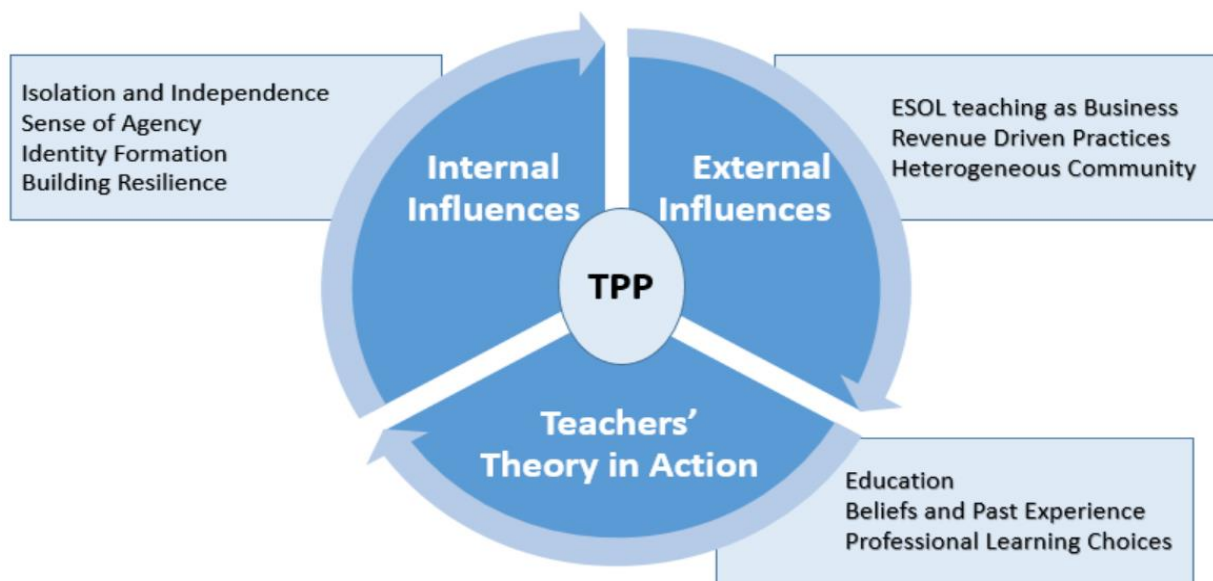
Therefore, as a response to the limited PLD budget participants noted that they decided to take the initiative, lead their own professional learning, and enhance their own professional practice. For instance, Mary stated that she chose to take charge of her professional learning and make a change in her practices as she realised that no one would arrange this for her. Sensei also articulated clearly that her need to take the lead and undertake the initiative to start further learning about ESOL examinations came as a result of her firm confidence that no one else would do so. Both Sensei’s and Mary’s perceptions of institutional support accumulated through a lot of experiences working for private ESOL teaching organisations and were supported by their understanding of the financial priorities of PTEs in Christchurch.

In-service teachers’ professional practice in relation to the wider work milieu

Understanding teachers’ professional practice in relation to the wider teaching milieu is essential to our understanding of what ESOL teachers’ preparations are and how in-service professional learning should be like. PTEs in this study present a special environment in which teachers have to tackle a mixture of internal and external influences which include teachers’ identity, agency and resilience building as well as juggling business values and educational principles. Teachers as the frontline group of these organisations have become sales representatives, marketing assistants, and educators at the same time. This dual nature of PTEs as workplaces was reported to bring high pressure on teachers’ shoulders and raised the job demands to an overwhelming level.

The following, Figure 10.3, presents a summary of work milieu influences which drive ESOL teachers' professional practice in PTEs. These influences included, but were not limited to, commercialised environment, a heterogeneous teaching community, building resilience, and teachers' own beliefs and practices. All participants agreed that their professional practice is a socially situated activity which was mediated by the wider surrounding teaching milieu which extends beyond their immediate teaching context in PTEs to include social and political aspects of private ESOL teaching as highlighted in the discussions of narrative and this chapter.

Figure 10.3: Teachers' professional practice in response to work milieu in PTEs.



Boundaries of this study

This phenomenological case study aimed to collect rich data about teachers' actual and real work life experiences, so I chose to ask each participant to attend three interviews over a period of three to nine months. This allowed me to capture the constant messages of participants and identify their perceptions of key constructs of their professional practice such as resilience, agency and teacher identity. Therefore, the study pool of participants was limited to five ESOL teachers within a particular period of time.

Although I started with twelve participants, this study's final pool of participants included five ESOL teachers. Firstly, some teachers could not commit to attend three consecutive interviews due to work pressure and they were overwhelmed by other teaching duties. Consequently, some teachers chose to withdraw from the study. I examined a slice of the teaching community who agreed to participate in this research study. Secondly, I chose to study the phenomenon from the perspective of those who noted that they have experienced it and was engaged in reflecting

on their professional practice, and teachers who accepted to share their perceptions about their work conditions with me. Thirdly, the purpose of the three interviews was to collect rich data and give participants enough time to build trust. Therefore, tracking change in participants' professional practice was not among the aims of this research project.

Although these selection criteria limited the number of researchers to five only, it also allowed me to focus on collecting richer data about the actual experiences of every individual teacher regardless of the number of participants. In other words, I chose to collect in-depth data about these five teachers rather than increasing the number of participants which would affect the data richness about every individual participant. However, a broader scale study including a larger number of ESOL teachers in PTEs could be one of my future research projects.

In addition to this, the pool of participants as described above was limited to a specific kind of ESOL teachers in PTEs. Teachers in this study are those who have managed to stay committed to their jobs despite private ESOL teaching challenges. There is a high possibility that there are other teachers who resigned or chose to make a career shift due to being unable to cope with private ESOL teaching constraints. The stories of those who chose to quit would give different accounts of private ESOL teaching professional practice in comparison with the five participants in this research who showed the stamina to face challenges. I believe that expanding the boundaries of my future research to include other teachers who stopped working for PTEs or have done a career shift would be useful for the further understanding of ESOL teaching conditions in PTES.

This study was guided by my personal interest to focus on teachers' often unheard voices in the field of private ESOL teaching, as I had experience in ESOL teaching and ELT management in PTEs in the Middle East and New Zealand. This study aimed to amplify teachers' voices, and did not include manager or business owners' views. Nevertheless, institutions' management and business owners' practices and perceptions play an essential role in private ESOL teaching and their contributions would enrich and deepen the understanding of PTEs dynamics and teachers' professional practice. Further research would successfully expand the boundaries of this case study to collect data from business owners and institutions' management.

Another limitation to this research study is its focus on hearing only from teachers in private training establishments (PTEs) in Christchurch. However, ESOL teachers also work in government funded establishments such as schools and universities, and covering professional

practice in these other contexts would add to the understanding of how the business model of private ESOL teaching would affect teachers' practices in other work contexts. Future research studies comparing ESOL teachers' professional practices in PTEs to government funded schools would serve to illuminate the complexity of the relationship between ESOL teachers' professional practice and work environment.

Data collection for this research study was not directly affected by COVID-19 and the mosque shooting. Further research studies on teachers' professional practice during COVID-19 and mosque shooting would expand the understanding of how external influences affect private ESOL teaching. Teachers' professional practice in this study seemed to be highly responsive to changes in the surrounding environment such as natural disasters as well as social incidents. Therefore, further research around teaching experiences under epidemics and horrific incidents such as terror attacks and COVID-19 would enhance the understating of the private sector's dynamics.

Recommendations of the study

This study investigated the professional practice of ESOL teachers in PTEs, and recommendations arise for teachers, institutions' managers, business owners, and ESOL teacher educators. These recommendations are only tentative, as they are based on the experiences of the five participant teachers.

In-service teachers in this study are a group of in-service teachers who showed resilience, decided to fight challenges, and continued teaching under the pressure of private ESOL teaching conditions. However, most of their learning as well as their attempts to lead change were individually driven and came as a reaction to emerging issues of their immediate work context and wider milieu. This study recommends that teachers get continuously engaged in learning activities. These learning activities can result in creating professional learning communities of in-service teachers. These professional learning communities should be teacher driven and remain open to other learning communities outside their workplace boundaries. Teachers should expand their professional knowledge beyond their immediate work context. In addition, teachers should understand and cope with the private ESOL teaching conditions, so they can contribute to achieving institutional, academic and financial goals. This can be achieved by enhancing their ability to direct their own professional learning.

Teachers' perceptions of the role institution management played in facilitating their professional practice varied between supportive and discouraging. However, teachers

highlighted the discouraging practices more than the supportive ones. They also stated that revenue making, top down management, and the weak educational background of the institution's managers are the reasons behind their discouraging practices. This study recommends that ESOL management in PTEs should include ESOL qualified members who are business oriented to create this balance between educational principles and business values at workplaces. This study also recommends that institutions' management should adopt more bottom up decision making, procedures and policies by opening proper and professional channels of dialogue between teachers and managers. These channels would allow PTEs to design in-house activities for teachers to boost their sense of agency and empower them to be part of decision making. These practices such as distributed management would enhance the professional practice of the whole organisation as well as teachers' sense of resilience.

The five narratives make suggestions to the business owners. Although there is no guarantee that business owners will read this thesis, I chose to include them. Business owners in PTEs are usually seen by teachers as investors who only care about revenue creation. However partially true, this notion can be considered as a one-sided perception of the issue. PTEs owners are investing their money to achieve a margin of revenue and contribute to the improvement of the personal and academic lives of a large number of international and domestic students. Simultaneously, they have to pay wages and other expenses to be able to continue in the field. This study recommends that business owners should adopt policies and procedures which ensure the balanced power of education and business in PTEs. While it is fair for business owners to achieve revenue, it is essential for the fee paying students to develop their language skills in return. Enhancing teachers' professional practice has been presented as one key method of improving students' outcomes. Therefore, adopting the approach of in-service teachers' empowerment is recommended to enhance students' outcomes which would result in more revenue and serve the financial goals of the organisation.

ESOL teaching stakeholders such as managers, and business owners should reconsider their practices in relation to providing support for ESOL teachers in PTEs. Also, their understandings of what constitutes ESOL teachers' work milieu should be reconsidered in order to enhance work conditions for a group of unheard teacher voices. ESOL teachers' voices in private establishments should be valued and proper channels of communication should be established for the benefit of teachers, students and business owners. Teachers showed stamina and resilience to guide and better their professional practice when they are trusted and

supported by the surrounding community, so it is the institutions' role to facilitate and guide this in a bottom-up manner.

This study has also identified a gap in the in-service teachers' professional knowledge, especially in the private sector. Participants reported that they usually needed to update their professional knowledge to be able to maintain teaching practices and achieve students' satisfaction. Therefore, ESOL teacher educators and designers of ESOL teacher training courses and certificates should work on enriching the content of pre-service and in-service ESOL teacher education with a description of various workplace challenges and required skills to meet these conditions.

Understanding the actual work conditions in PTEs and the surrounding social, political and economic challenges raised in this study should be introduced hand to hand with teaching methodology in these ESOL teachers' preparation courses. Work milieu in PTEs should be included in ESOL teacher education programmes and certificates. However, this would require a broader epistemological stance of ESOL teacher education and certification in relation to course content creation. For example, resilience creation and soft work environment skills should be a part of ESOL teacher education/training to make teachers ready for the real challenges which they would face when they start working in similar environments. This might also require changing the underpinning philosophy of current ESOL teachers' preparation courses to allow real and practical chances of equipping teachers with individualised and practically-informed techniques and strategies. This would improve their work life skills and provide them with the enablers which facilitate handling work daily issues in different contexts rather than practising top down teacher learning strategies in a one-size-fits-all ESOL teacher preparation programmes.

Besides, further investigation of work milieu in PTEs had become essential to our understanding of the profession of private ESOL teaching, as it has become a global phenomenon in the era of the English language as a lingua franca which is used as a global means of communication. It is also evident that private ESOL teaching is not only benefiting business owners, but presents a good source of income by attracting international students who live and spend money in the country and contribute to the whole country's economy. Therefore, the government should have plans to enhance the work conditions of teachers in PTEs as this is directly connected to students' retention and their academic progress which are essential to the financial growth of the private sector.

Further study

Participant teachers have repeatedly highlighted the lack of systematic and teacher driven professional learning and development (PLD) activities, especially for private organisations and in particular ESOL in-service teachers. Future studies can also investigate in-service teachers' PLD programmes and present a suggested model for effective in-service PLD best practices. There is also a need to develop a comprehensive code of practice for designing and implementing more bottom up teacher PLD practices within ESOL private organisations. This study raised questions around in-service PLD implementation and its nature for future researchers to build upon and contribute to both individuals' and organisations' professional learning.

This study highlighted key moments in teachers' professional practice which included the time when they needed to reconcile among maximising revenue, contributing to the organisation's goals, and remaining committed to their ethical and moral values. These three aspects have not shown enough harmony and uniformity, yet. Teachers reported that they felt pressurised to compromise on what they believed as teaching quality. This raises questions about whether the current studies conducted in this area are enough to guide the practices of the private sector, or comfortably borrow private sector's policies and apply them to public sector organisations. It is still a risky decision to apply business values to the public sector before backing it up with solid empirical evidence. Further studies, which would have a wider pool of participants in different contexts such as private and public sectors, are necessary to examine the possibility of reconciling business values and education principles.

Final comment

Participants' accounts of their lived experiences of ESOL teaching in PTEs highlighted the particular nature of the private ESOL teaching work milieu. Teachers' work conditions in PTEs are not ideal and less than adequate in some cases due to the number of challenges which they have to deal with on their own. Both immediate work environment as well as work milieu in the private sector make demands and creates conditions which seem to be beyond teachers' control, and have a number of inherited characteristics such as instability and unpredictability. These specific characteristics of PTEs seemed to bring tensions to teachers' professional practice.

This study reported teachers' professional knowledge and professional practice as a reflection of their work milieu. What takes place in the broader work milieu has an impact on teachers'

practices inside and outside their classrooms. The broader teaching milieu can create a healthy environment for teachers to operate and develop by eliminating unnecessary influences and unjust professional practices. Thus, teachers' professional practice, in PTEs, is not just about planning and executing a set of activities to enhance students' outcomes; teachers' professional practice was described as being affected by national and international aspects of the social work milieu.

As it has become evident in this research study that teaching ESOL in PTEs is unique in many aspects, especially its dual nature of combining both business values and educational principles. Teachers' daily work was presented as a complex and multi-layered practice; a socially situated activity which has sociocultural, political, ideological and relational dimensions. Teachers' professional practice in this study revealed the tensions and complicated relationships teachers have to grapple with to be able to achieve their moral and ethical goals. Their inner sense of *the self* has been always tested and shaped and reshaped by the surrounding immediate environment as well as the broader work milieu; negotiation of teachers' identity was an ongoing activity which accompanied their attempts to maintain continuous professional learning and development to be able to cope with the dynamic work milieu.

Thus, teachers' narratives reported their attempts to make decisions about their professional practice, take agentic actions, and act accordingly. They were also able to bounce back after facing challenges to maintain a balance between their educational principles and the imposed commercial requirements of ESOL teaching institutions. Their resilience allowed them to remain in the field motivated by their inner sense of responsibility as well as sympathy for their students.

In conclusion, this research project narrates the story of the five ESOL participant teachers, and represents their perspectives on key characteristics of professional practice in private training establishments in Christchurch. Teachers' story has summarised their experiences of dealing with work life challenges, reporting moments of despair, bouncing back from hardships, fighting for their rights, and striving to maintain their professional standards. ESOL teachers' professional practice is dynamic, and requires a collaborative effort by teachers and those who are involved in their immediate work context as well as the broader work milieu such as students, managers, and business owners. This project calls for the voices of ESOL teachers in PTEs to be heard, their professional practices to be further examined, and decisions about the content of their pre-service education to be revisited.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A: Information sheet for teachers



Information Sheet for Teachers

To Teacher Christchurch, New Zealand

ESOL Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Practice in Post School Private Training Establishments

I am Said Zohairy, a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) student under the supervision of Prof Janinka Greenwood and Prof Letitia Fickel in the College of Education, Health and Human Development at University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

My intended research is based on English language institutes in the tertiary education sector in Christchurch, New Zealand. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study. The title of my study is "ESOL Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Practice in Post School Private Training Establishments". The study aims to understand ESOL tertiary teachers' work life experiences and the perceived impact on their sense of classroom practices. The results of this research are expected to inform teachers, educators and stakeholders' future decisions and policies that facilitate teachers' professional practice.

This study will last for around eight months. During this study, you will be invited to attend three semi-structured one-to-one interviews. The interviews will last approximately 45 minutes for the first one, and 30 minutes for the other two. The interviews will be arranged at a time and location of your choosing. In addition to that, between the interviews, you will be asked to respond to two emails about your engagement in professional activities. To assist researcher recall, your interviews will be recorded on an audio device. You will be able to review the transcribed interviews to avoid any misinterpretation of your experiences.

There are no apparent or foreseen risks in participating in this study. Your involvement in this research will be voluntary. Should you agree to participate, you have the right to withdraw at any time without any penalty. In case you withdraw your consent, all the information you provided will remain valuable and could be used in my research, unless you have requested to remove all collected data.

The results of the research will be published but you are assured of the complete confidentiality of information gathered in this investigation. I will not share your participation with any of your colleagues or leaders of your organisation. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the study for your college/school/institute and your names. Only me, my two supervisors and the transcriber will have access to the information you have provided. The transcriber will be asked to sign a transcription confidentiality agreement. The information will be stored on my personal computer locked with password and on official computer of University of Canterbury during the study. Then, it will be kept for 10 years on my personal flash drive, and will be destroyed at the end of this period. A dissertation is a public document that will be available through University of Canterbury library.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz. If you would like to receive a summary of this study, please email me said.zohairy@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

If you agree to participate in the study, you are kindly asked to complete the consent form, scan and email it to: Said Zohairy, School of Teacher Education

University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand

Phone No.: 0064-220994574 (NZ)

E-mail: said.zohairy@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Appendix B: Consent sheet for teachers

School of Teacher Education
University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand
Phone No.: 0064-220994574 (NZ)
E-mail: said.zohairy@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Consent Form for Teachers

ESOL Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Practice in Post School Private Training Establishments

- I have read, understood, and retained a copy of the information sheet provided to me.
- I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand what is required of me, if I agree to take part in the research.
- I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should I wish to be removed.
- I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher, supervisors and the transcriber who have access to the information and that any published or reported results will not identify me or my college/school/institute as well as my college/school/institute names.
- I understand that a dissertation is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- I understand that I am allowed to receive a report on the findings of the study by contacting the researcher at the conclusion of the project.
- I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form next ten years. This will be destroyed after the stated period.

Please use as pseudonym for me.

- I understand that I can contact the researcher, Said Zohairy at said.zohairy@pg.canterbury.ac.nz for further information.
- I have been informed that this research study has received ethical approval from the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, and if I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Note: Would you like to receive a report on the findings of the study? Yes ☐ No ☐

If "Yes", please write your preferred email address:

Name: Cell/Phone Number:

Date: Signature:

Please return this form after it is signed to Said Zohairy or email scanned copy to said.zohairy@pg.canterbury.ac.nz.

Appendix C: Information sheet for principals



Information Sheet for Principals

To, Christchurch, New Zealand *EFL Tertiary*
ESOL Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Practice in Post School Private Training Establishments

I am Said Zohairy, a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) student under the supervision of Prof Janinka Greenwood and Prof Letitia Fickel in the College of Education, Health and Human Development at University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

My intended research is based on English language private training establishments in the tertiary education sector in Christchurch, New Zealand. I am seeking your permission to undertake my research in your college/school/institute. The title of my research is "ESOL Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Practice in Post School Private Training Establishments". The aim is to understand ESOL tertiary teachers' work life experiences and their perceived impact on their professional practice. The results of this research are expected to inform teachers, educators and stakeholders' future decisions and policies that facilitates teachers' professional practice.

This study will last for eight months. Participants in the study will be drawn from nominations according to the selection criteria. As the School principal, you will be provided the selection criteria upon your approval to allow staff in your organisation to participate in this research project. During this study, your nominated teachers will be invited to participate in three semi-structured one-to-one interviews. In addition, they will be asked to respond to two emails about their engagement in professional activities. To assist researcher recall, teachers' interviews will be recorded on an audio device.

There are no apparent or foreseen risks in participating in this study. Teachers' involvement in this research will be voluntary. Should they agree to participate, they have the right to withdraw at any time without any penalty. In case they withdraw their consent, all the information they provided will remain valuable and could be used in my research, unless the participant has requested to remove all collected data.

The results of the research will be published but you are assured of the complete confidentiality of information gathered in this investigation. To ensure teacher participant confidentiality, I will not be able to confirm with you which of your staff have volunteered to participate. Also, pseudonyms will be used throughout the study for teachers' and college/school/institute names. Only ~~me~~, my two supervisors and the transcriber will have access to the information teachers have provided. The transcriber will be asked to sign a transcription confidentiality agreement. The information will be stored on my personal computer locked with password and on official computer of University of Canterbury during the study. Then, it will be kept for 10 years on my personal flash drive, and will be destroyed at the end of this period. A dissertation is a public document that will be available through University of Canterbury library.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz. If you would like to receive a summary of this study, please email me said.zohairy@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

If you agree to allow members of your organisation participate in the study, you are kindly asked to complete the consent form and return to: Said Zohairy, School of Teacher Education

University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand
 Phone No.: 0064-220994574 (NZ)
 E-mail: said.zohairy@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Appendix D: Consent sheet for principals

School of Teacher Education
University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand
Phone No.: 0064-220994574 (NZ)
E-mail: said.zohairy@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

**Consent Form for Principals***ESOL Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Practice in Post School Private Training Establishments*

- I have read, understood, and retained a copy of the information sheet provided to me.
- I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand what is required of me and my college/school/institute if I agree to take part in the research.
- I understand that participation is voluntary and teachers may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information teachers have provided should they wish it be removed.
- I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and supervisors who have access to the information and that any published or reported results will not identify participant teachers of my college/school/institute as well as my college/school/institute name.
- I understand that a dissertation is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- I understand that I am allowed to receive a report on the findings of the study by contacting the researcher at the conclusion of the project.
- I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form next 10 years. This will be destroyed after the stated period.

Please use as pseudonym for our college/school/institute.

- I understand that I can contact the researcher, Said Zohairy at said.zohairy@pg.canterbury.ac.nz for further information.
- I have been informed that this research study has received ethical approval from the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, and if I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Note: Would you like to receive a report on the findings of the study? Yes ☐ No ☐

If "Yes", please write your preferred email address:

Name: Cell/Phone Number:

Date: Signature:

Please return this form after it is signed to Said Zohairy or email scanned copy at said.zohairy@pg.canterbury.ac.nz.

Appendix E: Transcription confidentiality agreement



TRANSCRIPTION CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Thank you for your participation in this research project titled “ESOL Tertiary Education Teachers’ Perception of the Effect of Self-driven Professional Learning and Development on their Collective Efficacy”. Protecting the confidentiality of participants is essential and you are therefore asked to sign the following confidentiality agreement.

I, _____, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all verbal information and audio recordings received from the research team for the above project. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual and the content of any discussion that may be revealed during transcription
2. To not make copies of any audio files or ~~computerised~~ files of the transcribed focus groups, unless specifically approved to do so by the researcher.
3. To store all audio files and materials in a password protected computer or safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.
4. To return all materials to Said Zohairy in a complete and timely manner at the completion of transcription
5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents or audio files from my computer hard drive and any back-up devices on completion of transcription.

I am aware that I can be held legally responsible for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audio files and/or files to which I will have access.

Name (printed) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix F: Follow up emails

Kia ora,

Hope this finds you well.

I am writing to get in touch with you concerning your professional practice during the past two weeks.

Please respond to the following questions. You can use bullet points.

For the past two months:

1- What were the professional challenges that you have faced?

-

2- What did you do about them (as for solutions)?

-

3- Why did you choose these activities or solutions to deal with those challenges?

-

4- How did this change affect your classroom practices?

- |

Thank you for your time.

Regards,
Said